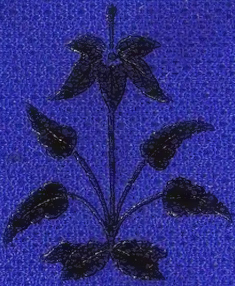

JUNIA

M. Carman
1888

JUNIA

A NOVEL

BY THE AUTHOR OF 'ESTELLE RUSSELL,' 'THE PRIVATE LIFE OF GALILEO,' ETC.

Allan-Olney, Mary

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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JUNIA.

CHAPTER I.

In the old Pinacothek at Munich hangs a portrait by Titian of a girl dressed in red velvet, holding a feather fan in her hand. She stands and smiles out of her gilded frame now, just as she may have stood and smiled out of her palace window in her lifetime.

This smile is by no means such as would be called up by the sound of an expected voice, or the sight of an expected face. It is strictly the smile of pure inward content, and may be taken as the expression of negative happiness in its highest degree. The smooth white forehead and calm deep eyes confirm the mouth's avowal. On the whole, this fair face tells us of a life spent hitherto in the warm shade, where no fierce passion of love or hate has come to parch the full red lips, nor cold blast of jealousy penetrated to shrivel the peach-like cheeks. As we look, we may forget for a while that all which remains of her is her picture here, and a handful of dust somewhere.

A handful of dust! Standing in front of that picture, I, for one, forget that she must have died more than three centuries ago. I find myself judging that girl's face as if she were alive in her palace in Italy, with her life all unfolded and its story to tell. I judge that she has heard of love just as she has heard of heaven; that she knows by experience as much of the one as of the other, and that she is in no great hurry for either yet.

There she stands, as sweet and simple and unconscious in her robe of red velvet, as if it were a robe of brown serge. But there is no vestige of silliness in her face. She knows of her own beauty: recognises it as she would any other established fact. So it would be were her nurse silent and her mirror cracked, and friends and followers blind. She likes this gift of beauty; takes pleasure in it —just such pleasure as Titian there, who sits and paints and says nothing. To be beautiful is the most natural thing in the world, she thinks. She would as soon hate the beauty in the other girls' faces as she would hate the lustre of her bird's plumage, or the tints of the roses that blossom in the palace garden. There is no room for vanity, nor envy, nor any other meanness, yet, in this young soul. At the sight of all perfect things her heart rejoices, though she knows not why. As for the distorted things—Nature's mistakes—she does not take Nature to task yet. She turns her eyes away from them, whenever they cross her path—which is much the easiest thing to do. Will the interrogative mood ever wrinkle that sweet forehead, you wonder?

There is another portrait by the same master, so widely known that description is almost superfluous. I mean the Belladonna in the

Sciarra gallery at Rome. Truly, as one looks at this, it needs no great stretch of fancy to suppose that the name had a double meaning. For, if one gazes long enough to carry away a distinct impression of the picture, the eyes haunt one as persistently as those of a living woman might.

You, antiquary, art-worshipper, busy idler, bookworm—it matters not who—you take up your abode in Rome laudably determined to look at all those pictures in all those galleries, (how many miles of them !) to examine, critically, all the statues in the Vatican and elsewhere, decipher all the worn-out inscriptions, walk round all the churches, (how many hundreds of them !) climb to the summit of all the steeples, toil up the Santa Scala in orthodox fashion, perhaps ! But to do all these things would take three lifetimes ; and you, each man and woman of you all, have but one apiece.

Nevertheless, the Sciarra gallery is marked down in your weekly programme for a Saturday morning, let us say. With faithful 'Murray' under your arm, you set out to do your duty. If you are not a picture fanatic, you groan beforehand, remembering the times you have already run the gauntlet between companies of canvas saints and prophets, winged angels and bodiless cherubs, nobles and cardinals, thick-lipped and thin-lipped, stolid and cruel and crafty; with entombments and holy families as plentiful, almost, as the spring cyclamen and maidenhair in the Campagna.

Just what all the rest were, just so will these be. On you go, with mingled fortitude and resignation, hiding a yawn behind 'Murray.' One more room now, and then that gallery will be done.

At the end of that room Belladonna waits. From Saturday to Saturday she waits, with eyes that gleam as the door opens.

You look; once, twice, thrice. Yet once more, in spite of hot and tired eyelids, and brain-weariness, and inward impatience at the canvas thing which will not be passed by so, with such a summary glance.

It is time to go. You are glad of it. You are worn out in mind and body. Nevertheless, anxious to do your duty to the last, you, on your way homeward, give one glance at a fountain, or a bit of ancient wall, or perhaps inside a cool dark church where they are singing vespers.

So the day wanes and your work is done. Hard work this, the daily looking at pictures by the mile, painted by so many dead men. You confess as much, sitting by a fire of wood (for Roman evenings are ofttimes chilly). You go through a mournful pretence of making all snug. You read your English newspaper. You come to the conclusion that the Executive is a pack of old women, and that your beloved country is only saved from utter destruction by possessing, among the rabble rout of effete statesmen, a chosen few (your discernment tells you) who have not yet bowed the knee to Baal.

This conclusion reached, you throw aside your paper, you set the logs a-blazing, and sink by slow degrees into that objectless reverie which is so sweet an end to a long toilsome day.

Suddenly, on the dim wall opposite, beyond the fire's fitful glimmer, two calmly implacable eyes blaze steadily on you—the eyes of Belladonna. You turn away in vain; in vain you close your eyes; in vain you look at the fire. Look where you will, shut out the light as you will, — eyes, forehead, mouth, presently the whole face stands clearly out: the underhung jaw, so firmly fixed; the pitiless, smileless lips, so tightly shut; the forehead, so treacherous in its brazen smoothness; the eyes, so steadfast in pursuance of their prey, with deep dark lines below that tell of secret anguish, of wrong endured, of sweetness turned to gall. Such is the face your fancy sees upon the wall. One would think that when alive this lady's charms exhaled a poison as deadly as the belladonna of the damp luxurious hedgerow. It is a cruel face, you think, shutting your eyes, as though that might shut out the sight of it. Cruel, and wicked, and——. A certain compunction comes over you. "Poor wretch," you say, half aloud, "perhaps she had a great deal to put up with. Who knows? She is dead, anyhow." And next Saturday sees you standing once more before her picture.

Her whole attitude, though on a superficial glance it merely expresses supreme confidence in her powers of pleasing, is in reality the attitude of a woman who knows how to wait, but who will never know how to forget or forgive. What may Belladonna's musings have been, while she sat to Titian for her world-famed portrait? We may suppose that it was not without a certain pleasure that she allowed her bright hair to be unbound, thus, to satisfy the painter's whim. We may suppose that Titian knew best how to humour her mood; knew best how to render fit homage to her beauty, whether by courtly speech or eloquent silence. We may conjecture how that oft-told tale went in at one ear and out at the other: how the lady, holding her hair with lax and absent fingers, let her thoughts wander away to bygone days of girlish happiness—to the love that had lifted her up suddenly from girlhood to womanhood—to the rivalries and jealousies, the storms and furies that had surrounded her in that new life. Memories these, of which the outcome is a silent, deep breathing for vengeance, all the while that she stands, intent and motionless, watching Titian's brush as it travels noiselessly over the canvas. Were she alive now, methinks, woe to the man or woman who should thwart her in her loves or her hatreds. She would surely earn again her name of Belladonna. That she did earn that name in her lifetime, he who has been haunted for a night by that terrible face of hers will be convinced, whether he will or no.

This pitiless beauty of the Sciarra gallery is a woman, one may say, of some thirty years or thereabouts. The portrait in the Pinacothek at Munich is that of a girl of seventeen. To the person who studies both with care, it becomes clear that both are portraits of the same woman. Only after careful, faithful study—lastly of the sweet innocent face of the Munich picture—does one begin to feel some pity for the pitiless, witchlike Belladonna, with her billowy hair and her fine satin sleeves, and the agony in her heart. What! did those deep-lined eyes once look at the world from palace windows, with no worse wish than to see a dappled sky? Did the bright hair so artfully rippled once encircle a forehead whose smoothness was youth's dowry, not the premeditative smoothness of guile? What must the turmoil of that life have been, which from seventeen to thirty could work this change!

These two pictures of one woman are a riddle; so was the woman herself, perhaps. Suppose we have read the riddle wrongly?

The eyes are deep. May they not have been deepened by despair? They seem to pursue implacably. May it not be that they are asking unceasingly some unanswerable thing? Some question that gnaws daily and nightly at the heart's core? "Where are my gods, my heroes? Why do I stretch out empty hands in the darkness, and cry aloud to empty air? What have I done that I should be thus tormented?"

Look at the portrait sideways, and it changes its expression. She waits still, but she has ceased asking that implacable, unappeasable "why." As she pales in the sunlight apathy seems stealing over her; the underhung jaw relaxes in its firmness. The battle goes against her, and she knows it, but will not weep yet.

Was your question ever answered, O Belladonna? And did you battle to the last in brave attire, or did you hide your hair under a nun's coif, and solve your problem so?

How one would like to know!

After long study of some such work as this of Titian's, we go about seeking, half unconsciously, for the living type of the face which haunts us. Sometimes we seek and find, sometimes it comes upon us unawares. Thus, in Via Larga one day, I found Rossellino's St John Baptist in the shape of a sturdy little beggar with rags about him for skins. In a carriage driving through a London street I saw the Empresses Julia and Placidia. I know where two goddesses dwell, Juno and Minerva, that have come down to us in the likenesses of women, daughters of a western hemisphere.

Would you see the living likeness of the girl in the red velvet dress? Then follow me up the Via Crucio to the church of San Miniato, and the high hill overlooking Florence.

CHAPTER II.

THERE, on that broad paved terrace facing the west, you may sit and watch the evening mist as it steals over the city, and mark the river's course by the line of lamps that reaches from the Cascino to the Ponte alle Grazie. There, as the evening breeze rises, the hum of the busy streets rises along with it, and reaches your quiet resting-place, mingling on its way with the sound of the church bells.

There, on the afternoon of a bright April day, a boy and girl sat side by side, each with sketching-block on knee: both absorbed in their work, a water-colour sketch of the Val d'Arno. For nearly an hour no word had passed between the two. At length the girl laid down her brush, and, with a deep soft sigh, leaned herself lightly on the boy's left shoulder.

Meeting the movement half-way, the boy bent his head till his cheek almost touched that of his companion. He did not, however, cease working. For a moment the girl, with her cheek laid against his, followed with her eyes, automaton-like, the glance of his upward to the landscape and back to the sketching-block. These two were June and Junia Berrington, twin brother and sister.

"What made you sigh just now?" June asked, suddenly stopping short in his work.

"Because I am so happy," was the answer, in a sweet, deep English voice. "So happy, that I know the happiness cannot last for ever. And so, I sighed."

"Ah! you have been wandering among those old tombstones down yonder."

"No; I have not moved from your side since we sat down."

"Well," said June, after a pause, in a tone intended to convey consolation, "of course we shall both have to die one day. But that day may not come for a good long while yet, my Junia."

"I was not thinking so much of death," said Junia, "as of what may be in store for us before death. Life can scarcely be one long sweet afternoon like this, even for you and me, my June."

"Why not? I shall never want to leave you; you need not fear that."

"Oh no," and Junia's smile was very sweet. "You could not get on without me, could you, June?"

June stroked her cheek with his finger. "That I could not! And I don't see why we should not go on living as we do now, to the last day of our lives. To be sure," he continued, in the tone of one who provides for an improbable contingency, "you might take it into your head to marry; and then, if your husband were disagreeable, and wanted his house all to himself in the English fashion, I suppose I should be forced to marry in self-defence, because I should be so horribly lonely without you. But I hope you won't marry, for that would be altogether a nuisance—to me. For," June continued, meditatively, "a painter's wife ought to understand painting; else, how can he talk to her about his pictures, as I talk to you, for instance? And she certainly ought to be beautiful, that her husband's eye, when it rests on her, may not rest on an ugly thing. Now I cannot bear ugly women; and I have never yet seen the woman who did not look ugly beside you."

Junia laughed softly. "Why, that is only because you see yourself in me. Suppose I am the loveliest girl in the world, what must my twin brother be? Yet, could you look with my eyes, you would see half-a-dozen girls just as good-looking as I am, any afternoon on the Cascino. It is only your vanity that sets me so high."

"But I am not the only one who says everybody looks ugly beside you," said June. "Leicester Kinnaird said the same no longer ago than yesterday."

"I wish you would not discuss my looks with Mr Kinnaird," said Junia, vexed. "I don't like him; I don't like him at all."

June looked up, surprised at her change of tone. "Indeed I have never done so. Can you think I would do such a thing? No, indeed. When Mr Kinnaird said that, he was not speaking to me, but to a man who had been making disparaging remarks on the beauty of women nowadays. As if I would discuss your looks with any one!'

"Pardon, dear June. Of course I might have known that you would not." As she spoke she laid her hand lightly on her brother's arm. At the mention of Leicester Kinnaird's name her cheeks had flushed, and the flush had gone on deepening. But June had not observed it. He was still looking steadily at the landscape.

"No," he said, presently, as if he had been giving the subject further consideration—"no, I certainly have never met any one fit to compare with you."

"Except the Amazon in the Vatican."

"Except the Amazon, who might be your elder sister."

"And the Titian at Munich."

"And the Titian. Eyes and forehead and

hair—the very smile is yours. Put on a red velvet dress, and there you are! But the women of canvas and marble don't count. I was thinking of the real women, of course."

"Oh June, June!" the girl cried, with a hearty laugh, as she threw her arm round her brother's neck; "how delightful it is to have some one belonging to me who thinks me perfect!"

"If it were not so I should not think so," June replied, in the most matter-of-fact way. "Take away your arm for a minute—only a minute—and then I shall have done."

"Yes," said Junia, rising; "you had better leave off now, for the shadows have changed considerably since we began. And—oh, June!" she exclaimed, pointing to the long shadows of the cypresses at the gate on their right, "we ought not to have stayed so long. Mamma will not like my being out so late as this."

"I left a message with old Nanni that you were gone out sketching with me, so she will know that you are quite safe."

"Safe! yes. But mamma told me she did not wish me to be talked about, and begged me to try and be back always by sunset."

"Then how are you to study a sunset effect, I should like to know?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said Junia, with a sigh. "Only she said she did not wish me to be talked about. Nor do I wish it either."

"Talked about! Who talks? *Per Bacco!*" said June, raising his voice, "I should like to know who dares talk."

"Hush!" said Junia, half pleased at his impetuosity, half anxious lest there might be a listener. "She may be pottering about somewhere near for aught we know, spying out what we are doing."

"She! What she?" June demanded, in a voice not at all softly modulated.

"Oh, do speak lower. It was Miss Stubbes I meant," said Junia, in a whisper.

"Confound Miss Stubbes! Let her hold her tongue."

"But she won't do that. She could not, I believe, if she died for it." And Junia, in undertones, and breaking off now and again in low peals of laughter, told June how Miss Stubbes had heard of their walking to Peatolino and back together; and how she had told Mrs Berrington people's opinion—which meant her opinion — about that walk; and about other long walks which Junia had taken with June; and about the sketching expeditions altogether. Miss Stubbes belonged to a race which is rapidly becoming extinct. In her time, she had informed Mrs Berrington, a young lady would have been ashamed to walk fifteen miles and back, and still more ashamed to paint from real living models. Things were changed, doubtless, and young people followed their own bent nowadays. Still, she thought it her duty to let Mrs Berrington know what people said.

All this June heard while he was fastening up his sketching-box; and, as Junia told it, many and frank were his expressions of annoyance at Miss Stubbes and her meddling ways. As to those meddling ways having the effect of stopping their sketching expeditions, June refused to entertain such an idea for an instant. Junia did not feel quite so sure herself. " I should cry my eyes out, I think, if mamma were to tell me one day I was not to go out with you any more." So she said; and June quickly rejoined—" As if mamma would say such a thing!" But June had no instinct such as Junia had, to warn him of the power for evil of an idle woman's tongue. "To be talked about" was to Junia an ominous and terrible thing; not the less so because of its indefiniteness. And it was no secret to Junia—though the atmosphere of Mrs Berrington's house was as free from the taint of gossip as well could be—that Miss Stubbes, who knew everybody, and talked about everybody's affairs to everybody, contrived, somehow—always with the best intentions—to make enough people quarrel every winter to keep the atmosphere lively among the Anglo-Florentines; so that she passed fairly enough with those who considered discord preferable to dulness. She was, herself, an exceedingly proper person, and would have nothing to do with people to whom the shadow of aught disreputable attached. But as she chose to consider all artists as Bohemians, and would receive none of them, it may be thought her rule erred somewhat on the side of severity. When it is said that she would have scorned to receive in her drawing-room such persons as Miss Hosmer or Rosa Bonheur, perhaps some idea may be gained of her exceeding propriety. And as Junia desired nothing more earnestly than to rank one day beside those ladies as an artist, it may be supposed that, but for the accident of her parents being well off and holding a good position, she would not have been tolerated at all by Miss Stubbes. Miss Stubbes herself was only tolerated by Mr and Mrs Berrington, because to her name was attached the magic title of "the oldest resident." It is astonishing what a talisman this is, and what a multitude of unpleasant qualities it may be made to cover.

But June and Junia speedily forgot Miss

Stubbes and her meddling, in their rapid descent of the Via Crucio. Halfway down, Junia, stopping short, laid her hand on her brother's arm, with a gesture inviting silence.

"The nightingale!" she whispered. Heedless of the coming twilight, she leaned against a black cross which marked one of the seven stations, and listened in an ecstasy of delight. June sat down on a stone which formed part of the rough pedestal of the cross, and waited patiently. He was used to such waitings.

The bird, perched on a quince bough which thrust itself beyond the line of cypresses on the opposite side of the path, sang on, with as keen an enjoyment of its own music as ever a human songster had. With her strong eyes Junia could see the working of its throat. Presently another bird, perched on a tree in a neighbouring olive-ground, took up the song. Junia, still as a statue, stood with her hands tightly clasped, every sense shut except the sense of hearing. But June, seeing the lengthening shadows, remembered Miss Stubbes, and said, "It is getting late. I thought you were in a hurry to get home."

"True," said Junia; "let us make up for lost time." And they moved forward again at a pace which, as regards Junia, would have been stigmatised by Miss Stubbes as "a great deal too masculine for a young lady."

On they went, through Porta San Miniato and towards Ponte Vecchio. As they passed the little shops with their humble displays of maccaroni, bread, polenta, yellow peas, and the like, the women, sitting lazily at the doors, muttered, "O Madonna! what two lovely young creatures! What an angelic vision!"

"O *sposa* with the golden hair, give an ugly wretch a little *quattrino!*" drawled out a frowsy-looking beggar, as he raised himself from his couch on a stone step. "Beautiful angel from heaven, to me, to me,—a little *quattrino*, and I will pray for you. Thanks! May you never be old and hungry! May the most holy Madonna be with you!" was the chorus, as Junia dropped small coins here and there as she passed.

"That was pretty and new, was it not?" said Junia, when they had reached a less crowded part, and could hear themselves speak.

"I heard nothing new," said June, laughing. "'You are lovely; give me something,' was the burden of their cry, as usual."

"I meant, 'May you never be old and hungry.'"

"I call that silly, not pretty," said June; "for you know that, in the sense they take it, you never will be hungry. And you know equally well that, unless you die young, you must grow old."

They had slackened their pace somewhat as June spoke. On they went again with a pause midway on Ponte Vecchio to take breath and look at the sunset. Turning down Lung'arno, June, walking straight on and looking at the sky, jostled against a passenger. An apology in Italian, and the exclamation "Mr Kinnaird!" followed simultaneously.

At the sound of this name Junia, who had been up in cloudland, seeing all manner of glorious visions, was suddenly called down to earth, and became aware that her attire was very different from that considered by the *crême de la crême* of Anglo-Florentine society to be appropriate to the time and place; and that she was being spoken to by a man who set himself up for a connoisseur in the matter of ladies' dress; and who was himself most unmistakably a dandy, though not a very young one. Poor Junia! She had thought only of her sketching expedition as she dressed that afternoon, in obedience to her brother's impetuous summons. She had put on a well-worn, old-fashioned brown holland dress—an ugly, useful, broad-brimmed hat—thick boots, and brown gloves. And now, worst of all, her gloves were in her pocket instead of on her hands; and her hands were not dirty, but stained: stained with burnt sienna and light red, which was nearly as bad as if they had been dirty.

Quick as thought, as her brother uttered Mr Kinnaird's name, she shifted the drawing-box which she had been carrying under her left, to her right arm. Mr Kinnaird, observing that she did not offer her hand, merely bowed, with the remark—

"So you have been out sketching."

"Yes, it was just the day for it," said Junia, glancing covertly under her broad-brimmed hat at Mr Kinnaird's beautifully-fitting lilac kid gloves. How was it that gloves went so well on some hands, and so ill on others? Why was it that she, whenever she had gloves on,—yes, even lilac gloves,—was never quite happy until she had them off? Why did her fingers feel as if they always wanted to be doing something outside of gloves? She hoped that Mr Kinnaird would pass on, now that he had made his bow. But, instead, Mr Kinnaird turned and walked with June, who slackened his pace willingly, delighted at being taken notice of by the greatest dandy amongst his father's acquaintance. Junia, taking advantage of the crowd at that spot—it was where Lung'-arno narrows so that three cannot walk abreast—went on determinately by herself, fighting the feeling of embarrassment which the remembrance of her unfashionable attire had aroused within her.

"If I choose to wear an old hat and an old dress it is nobody's business," she said, defiantly, to herself. This state of mind imparted to her gait a measure of dignity which attracted Mr Kinnaird's attention. Observing, as he walked languidly along, the graceful fall of her shoulders, and the rings of golden hair—not dyed, he could tell well enough—which clustered thickly round her neck, he thought that she was, without doubt, the loveliest girl in Florence. Perhaps some instinct warned Junia that she was being admired by a man whom she did not like. Some girls would have felt flattered, honoured, to know that their good looks were discussed by such an one as Leicester Kinnaird, and such men as he called his friends. To Junia the knowledge was intolerable. Why could not everybody leave her, and her sketching, and her long walks, and her looks, alone? She stopped short as they entered Piazza Santa Trinita, and said to June—

"I am so tired! Will you call a cab?"

Tired! Not she. She could have walked all the way to San Miniato and back again. Mr Kinnaird could scarcely repress a smile as he handed her into the cab which rattled up at a sign from June. It was so very palpable to him that she was only tired of his company. "What a very odd girl she is!" he thought. As a rule, he disliked oddness in girls. Girls, indeed, had no business to be odd. But in this particular girl there was some attraction which outweighed the oddness. What was it? She was beautiful, certainly: but he felt it was not altogether her beauty which made her attractive. Her defects were more easily catalogued. She was a mere girl, to begin with; a mere girl, quite unformed, odd, unconventional, eccentric. It was the era of flounces. No girl, no woman was dressed in the fashion unless she had a row of diminishing flounces from foot to waist. Junia, nevertheless, had appeared sundry times in society in a dress of pale pink silk which hung in folds round her. Her head was innocent of pads and puffs, and her hair was drawn behind in a knot from which the curls hung down. It was the "correct thing" just then for a woman to wear a loaded wreath of all sorts of impossible flowers. Junia would be content with one rose in her hair. Miss Stubbes, as Leicester Kinnaird knew, thought Junia Berrington eccentric beyond anything that should ever be tolerated in a girl. The two were quite agreed that eccentricity in a young person was a most undesirable thing — a thing to be put down by the strong hand of society when possible. Leicester Kinnaird went further. To him, eccentricity was undesirable, because it might so happen that he might at some time see something eligible in the eccentric girl—something which might make him wish to make her his wife. It was true that Willy Stubbes was merciless in her judgments, and, somehow, never had a good word for a pretty girl, or for a clever girl. Miss Stubbes's name was Wilhelmina, but she was known as "Willy" all over Florence. "Eccentric?" he said to himself once or twice, interrogatively. "Untrained, I daresay. As untrained as a wild colt. But is she eccentric, after all ?" New fashions are eccentric at first. And when the new become old, again they are eccentric. What is eccentricity ? But Leicester Kinnaird's thoughts did not get so far as a definition. That was too much trouble on an evening such as this. His mind, instead of working out a definition, went back to the contemplation of Junia. A mere girl like that, to avoid shaking hands ! To walk on, so queen-like, leaving him to follow or not to follow ! To turn her back to him, instead of a face wreathed in smiles ! Was there another girl or woman in Florence who would have done this ? "Eccentric !" he said again to himself, and not in a tone of interrogation. "Eccentric, and as untrained as a wild colt !" Thus his thoughts wandered on, till he fairly put the question to himself, "Would it be worth one's while, now, to tame her and train her ?" Kinnaird had put that question to himself, in a slightly different form, respecting other ladies for more than one or two seasons past. But he was a languid man, and had always found courtship too arduous a task to be persevered in. Flirtation he had no objection to. But when a woman began taking things *au grand sérieux!*—And young women with money always did expect such a great deal of courtship!

But Junia Berrington did not give herself such airs as an heiress might. She had no airs—unless that failing to shake hands just now might be of the nature of airs—but she had enthusiasms without end. She was enthusiastic down to her finger-tips about Art, and Nature, and Antiquity, and all that fatiguing nonsense. Would it be possible for her to be enthusiastic in another direction? To worship a lover—supposing himself that lover—instead of expecting the lover to worship her? The Berringtons were steady-going, solid kind of people, who lived in very great comfort. Leicester Kinnaird was experienced enough to be aware that there is frequently more money in the background in the case of an unpretentious than of a pretentious style of living. It was said that Mr Berrington's daughters would be as well provided for as his sons. But would the provision be made at their marriage, or would they have to wait for their father's death? He must try to find out from Willy Stubbes, who knew everything. If the father gave nothing during his lifetime, of course there was an end of the matter. The old man—so Kinnaird called him in his thoughts, though Mr Berrington had vitality enough in him for twenty Kinnairds—the old man looked as if he might live to be a hundred.

And yet, Leicester Kinnaird did want a wife. He knew that in a few years he should be a martyr to hereditary gout. He had had already one or two sharp attacks, which nobody knew of. And oh, what weary work it was, having his valet to read to him, while he could not hold a book or turn over a page! By-and-by it would leak out that he was gouty, like his father and his grandfather. Such things always did leak out, thanks to those domestic spies, a man's servants. What pretty girl with money would marry him then? Kinnaird groaned in spirit as he thought of himself in years to come, at the tender mercy of a valet and a housekeeper.

There was, indeed, one person in the world whom he could always take as a *pis aller*, in case the pretty girls with money should to the end be exacting in their ideas of lovers' courtship. He could have her, he felt sure, if he could but make up his mind to ask her. This person was Miss Graham—Conny Graham, as she was always called—who lived with her cousin Willy Stubbes. Conny Graham had a comfortable fortune of her own, and was wise and liberal in the spending of it. There was, however, one thing, and that was her rouge-pot, in the application of which she was not wise, but liberal. It may be supposed from this circumstance, that for some years Miss Graham had had no natural roses to adorn her cheeks. She was, in truth, not so young as she had been; and the rouge made her look older than she need have done, because of the hardness it gave to her countenance;

whereas, hardness was foreign both to her real countenance and to her real character—what she had of it. If she was foolish about her rouge, she atoned for her foolishness by her good-nature. She was not very clever, nor very ready with her tongue; and she often had a hard life of it, patching up in her blundering way the characters her cousin Willy tore to shreds, and explaining away the evil reports which took their rise round Willy's tea-table.

Kinnaird's mind as he walked onwards was as a pair of scales, in which Junia Berrington and Constantia Graham were being weighed. First one scale went up, then the other. He felt tired and tantalised by the process; yet he did not feel able to end it one way or the other. A carriage stopped with two ladies in it, and he went up to speak to them. They were Miss Graham and Miss Stubbes, going home after their daily drive and round of visits. The one with tawny hair and curls and a little hat was Miss Graham: the one with white hair turned back from her face, and dark curls at her neck, a little hat, a double eye-glass, and a poodle dog, was Miss Stubbes. And Kinnaird said to himself with a shudder, as he shook hands with her, " How very thick Willy has put it on this afternoon!" Conny Graham's face was quite pale and subdued beside that of her cousin. Conny was not a bad lot by any means, he decided within himself, as he made his bow and passed on. Conny was always glad to see him, there was no doubt about that. Yet for many days after this April day did he continue to halt between two opinions. For so many days, indeed, that Miss Stubbes, who had keener eyes than even Leicester Kinnaird supposed, thought it her duty to tell her cousin that if she had any spirit she would bring him to the point.

" If it had been I, now," she declared, " I would have forced him to make up his mind one way or the other. I wouldn't have a man dangling about me like that—not for worlds ! "

But Constantia declared that she did not want Leicester Kinnaird to make up his mind. She liked having somebody to dangle about her. Why couldn't Willy leave them alone?

CHAPTER III.

To return to Junia. As she and her brother entered the great gate of Casa Falconieri, the house in which they had lived ever since they could remember, they found themselves brought into an atmosphere of mystery, which took the comical turn of keeping them waiting for dinner. Anna and Edward—one a girl a year younger than Junia, the other a boy of twelve — were waiting in the drawing-room with impatience. The cook was tearing his hair in the kitchen ; old Nanni, the butler and footman, was going to and fro uneasily in sympathy with his fellow-servitor ; and "Oh, I am so hungry!" burst from the young ones in the drawing-room. Mr Berrington was in his study. There he had been closeted for some hours with a person whom Nanni had described as a dark man with a blue bag. Mrs Berrington, vehemently inquired of who this person could be, replied laconically, " A person come to see your father on business ; "—and took up the newspaper. But Anna, gliding round to sit by her mother, saw that she held the newspaper upside down. Had it been Junia, she would have said, " Mamma ! you have the newspaper upside down ! " But Anna was one of those prudent people who never speak in a hurry. She smiled,—it was so odd her mother should be so absent. Then she looked at her mother's face, hidden behind the newspaper. Then she spoke very gently, " Are you feeling ill, mamma ? " Mrs Berrington started. " No, my dear, no," she said. Anna said in a whisper, still looking at her mother's face, " Is anything the matter ? " Again Mrs Berrington answered, " No, my dear, no." She tried to laugh, saying she supposed she looked hungry, " as you four children do." But she changed her seat and looked—as Anna said to herself—as miserable as if something had happened and she wanted to hide it, and hide her face. Anna was sure there was something the matter, and burned with desire to find out.

At last the distant sounds of conversation in the study ceased. There was a pause, the opening and shutting of doors, and then a longer interval, during which the look on Mrs Berrington's face became so strained, so painful in its eagerness, that Anna felt alarm mingling with her curiosity, and was half angry that June and Junia would not lift up their eyes from their sketch-books—" their stupid sketch-books " Anna called them in her thoughts — and see, as she saw, that something must be the matter with their mother.

At length Mr Berrington appeared, and gave his arm to his wife. She looked up anxiously, as if trying to read the result of an interview which had lasted the whole afternoon, in her husband's face or manner. The face was calm and composed—too calm, too composed, Mrs Berrington thought, with a sinking of the heart. His manner was always grave : now, she thought, it was the manner of a man who had made up his mind to the worst. Instinctively she tightened her grasp of her husband's arm. He answered by putting his hand on hers. What did that mean? Did it mean that she was to hope? or that she must summon up her fortitude? Mrs Berrington had never found her children in the way before. Now their presence was irksome to her; she longed to be able to send them away that she might speak, and hear what her husband had to tell her. There was no joking, no story-telling,—Mr Berrington was a capital story-teller,—no lingering over dessert that evening. When the silent dinner was over, and the young folk had adjourned to their usual evening resort—June's studio—June remarked that the stranger with the bag had given them all the evil eye.

"I never remember papa being so silent at a meal," said Anna, "and I feel perfectly sure something is wrong."

"What can be wrong?" asked the other three in chorus.

"Ah, what! That is what I should like to know," said Anna, with some satisfaction at her superior insight into things. "You two"—to June and Junia—"would never know what was going on close by you. I suppose you did not observe how pale and anxious mamma looked, all the time we were waiting in the drawing-room."

"I was looking over my sketch-book," said Junia, humbly. "I hope dear mamma is not going to be ill. Oh Anna, what can we do? Why did you not speak to me?"

"What would have been the good?" said Anna, shrugging her Lilliputian shoulders. Anna was Lilliputian from head to foot. She thanked Heaven for having made her so. She had no liking for Amazonian proportions: she rather despised large, tall people. "I can order about that big Junia," she would say in her self-communings, "and make her do almost anything I please—almost." Not quite, as Anna had found once or twice, when Junia had considered her own way the better, and had taken it, "as obstinately as any mule," Anna declared.

Instead of going to the drawing-room, Mr and Mrs Berrington had retired to the study after dinner. "Do tell me, Junius!" Mrs Berrington exclaimed, as the door closed behind them; "is it as bad as you feared?"

"Not quite," he said, sitting down close by her. "There has been a want of prudence, but I do not see, so far, that there has been dishonesty. I think—I believe—that the Kercombe Bank may pull through. It ought to pull through, for as a going concern it is a valuable property. But were we ever so firm, another bank might fall and pull us down with it. That is often the case."

"I wish you were not such a large shareholder."

"If I had known—but it is too late to wish that now. And nobody not gifted with omniscience could have foreseen that such a well-managed concern as that Bank could ever prove shaky."

"Of course you did things for the best. You were never a speculating man, never," said Mrs Berrington, with emphasis.

It was Anna Berrington's especial privilege to take her father his evening cup of tea wherever he sat : by the fire in winter, out on the loggia in spring. The loggia was deserted this evening. She poured the tea out, waited a little, then, muttering to herself, "They have talked business enough by this time, surely ; and the tea will be cold," she carried the cup to the study door. The study bell rang as her hand touched the handle.

"Lights, Nanni," her father said in Italian as she opened it. Then in English to her mother : "If things do come to the worst, remember, love, Leasowes cannot be touched. That is yours and little Edward's."

"I know. But the other three!"

Anna stood petrified in the doorway.

Her father groaned, "Ah! the other three!"

Anna turned back and entered the drawing-room. She put down the cup hastily, and threw herself upon the divan. Her heart beat tumultuously for the first time in her life, and she felt herself tremble from head to foot. She had her curiosity satisfied with a vengeance now. She did not intend to listen, for listening was unladylike. She really could not help hearing what she had heard. She wished herself for a moment to have been the unobservant creature Junia was, as the unaccustomed sensation of dread went through and through her with a stab of actual physical pain. After that moment was past, curiosity again came uppermost; knowing so much, she longed to know more. Then the buoyancy natural to her years asserted that things might not be so bad: that was an additional reason for longing to know more. The Leasowes was a large farm in Somersetshire, of which she only knew that it had been settled on her mother. The other three —who could they be but herself and June and Junia? Did it mean ruin? She would ask her mother the very next day.

But the next day Mr Berrington went on a journey. All Anna knew was, that his portmanteau was marked "London." "I shall be back as soon as possible," were his last words.

While he was away Anna had, daily, many opportunities of asking her mother the real meaning of those words she had heard by accident. But her mother's manner was such as to repel rather than invite confidence. She was absorbed and silent; and when a letter came from Mr Berrington she would be alone when she read it. Else there were no signs of impending ruin. When, after a few days, Mrs Berrington desired Anna's help in writing cards for an evening party, Anna felt sure that she had been mistaken in the meaning she had attached to what she had heard. She was glad, then, that she had had sufficient strength of mind to hold her tongue and say nothing to Junia. "I will not be so silly as to meet trouble half-way again," thought this wiseacre of sixteen. "Before I let myself be miserable, I'll know exactly what I ought to be miserable about."

CHAPTER IV.

It was in April that Junia had said to her brother that she did not like Mr Kinnaird. It was on a May afternoon that Junia, sitting before her dressing-table, was hiding her burning face in her hands, thinking, half aloud, "Why, why am I blushing so? What a fool he must think me!"

"He" was Mr Kinnaird.

Junia had been for a drive in the Cascino with her mother. As they stepped down from the carriage at Casa Falconieri gates, Mr Kinnaird had passed, and had stopped to chat for a few moments. He had asked the question which all the English were asking each other just then: "When are you going away? And where are you going?"

That the summer was setting in very early this year all agreed. Nor could it be denied that there were ugly reports of cholera at Leghorn.

"I suppose you will go to the Bagni, as usual," said Kinnaird. "Every one says your villa is such a charming place. I really don't know what I shall do this year. Switzerland is so overrun with English."

"I fear that the Bagni will be overrun in the same way," said Mrs Berrington.

"That could not be, from the nature of things. I daresay I may end by trying Bagni."

"We shall be happy to see you, if you are there," said Mrs Berrington, as she entered the iron gate, which had flown open as if by magic when the carriage stopped. Junia was entering after her mother, when Kinnaird stopped her.

"Will *you* be happy to see me if I come?" he asked, with emphasis, bending over her.

Surprised, Junia raised her eyes to his—faltered—dropped them.

"Will you?" he insisted.

"Yes, of course I shall," she said, recovering herself.

"Your hand upon it!" He seized her hand, pressed it in both his own—dropped it—and was gone. Junia, more surprised than before, ran up-stairs after her mother.

"Oh what a fool I am! Why are my cheeks so red? And what did he mean by asking such a silly question?"

Such were the questions which Junia now began to ask herself. What did Mr Kinnaird mean? The interrogative mood had come to her at last, and was ruffling the pond-like stillness of her young life. Sometimes she felt impatient at the turn her thoughts would take. Why should she care to know what he meant?—"He," always "he." Then again, she felt eager to know—as eager as she had just before been impatient. When, shortly afterwards, by a mere accident, she found herself one of a party which had been got up by Miss Stubbes, with Mr Kinnaird's help, to go to La Verina, she felt glad, only because she might find an opportunity of satisfying herself that Mr Kinnaird had meant nothing—nothing at all: that his earnestness only seemed earnest because it was the earnestness of a man who gave to the ordinary observer the impression that he never could be in earnest about anything, even if his life depended on it. Junia, indeed, had not been invited at first, but her mother. Miss Stubbes wished some one to be of the party who both knew the localities and knew Italian.

"I know both, of course," said Miss Stubbes, in an off-hand manner. "But when one has to serve as guide and interpreter to half-a-dozen friends who are strangers to the place and the language, it becomes a fatiguing business. Now you have been there many times, and you speak Italian like a native. Do come!"

Mrs Berrington excused herself. She was not quite well, she said. In truth, she was not in spirits to act as cicerone. And besides, as Vallombrosa and Camaldoli were to be included in the excursion, it would take up three days. She could not be away from home when a letter came from her husband. But she did not give that as her excuse. She only said that she was not quite well, and that she wished to take care of herself on account of her party, which was coming off in a few days. But there was Junia, who knew all those places, and who spoke Italian better than she did. Would Miss Stubbes like Junia to go in her place?

It was impossible to refuse the substitute thus offered; but Miss Stubbes accepted it in a very angry spirit. She had resolved, when this excursion first occurred to her mind, that she would not have a pack of girls. She had been forced to ask two, and Junia would make up the third.

"I know what it will be," she said, crossly, to her cousin Constantia. "The men will most of them cry off at the last moment. And then, at La Verina I shall have no one to attend to my horse, and I shall die of nervousness. I'll tell you what it is, Conny, I have half a mind to give the thing up altogether."

But Conny, who wanted to go, entreated Mr Kinnaird privately to keep the men of the excursion to their bargain. And Mr Kinnaird did so manage that on the appointed morning they set out, only two out of five men invited having cried off unhandsomely at the last moment. Of the ladies of the party Junia knew only Miss Stubbes and Miss Graham. There were three others—two girls of Junia's own age, or perhaps a little older, and their mother. There should have been five men, but for the two who failed to come. "You gave me your word that I could depend on those men!" Miss Stubbes said, reproachfully, to Kinnaird. "I'll never believe you again—never!" "What can I do?" Kinnaird asked, with mock anxiety. "They have got sunstroke, or cholera, or something. It was very wrong of them to choose this particular morning for going on the sick-list. I agree with you in that respect. Shall I call them out for it when we get back? If they are alive, that is."

Miss Stubbes shuddered at the sound of the word cholera. "I know you say it to frighten me," she exclaimed. "You are the most trifling man I ever met with; else you would not joke on such a subject."

This was said as they set off. "How any girl can bear to have that man dangling about her is more than I can tell," Miss Stubbes said, in her wrath, to her companions in the carriage.

Junia blushed; the two young ladies looked demure; the young men laughed outright.

The party did not bid fair to turn out a very merry one. There were too many antagonistic elements; and elements which were, if not precisely antagonistic, heterogenous. Junia, before long, began heartily to wish herself in the carriage that held Miss Graham and Mr Kinnaird. Her efforts to act as cicerone to the young lady strangers were very coldly received, and she was conscious of an indefinable sense of discomfort, such as a person not necessarily over-sensitive may feel when surroundings are totally uncongenial.

It would have been strange indeed had Junia found anything like congeniality in the young ladies who, being, as she had seen, about her own age, she had naturally supposed to be intended for her especial companionship during the excursion. These young ladies were indeed young ladies after Miss Stubbes's own heart. They wore gloves all day and all night. They voted walking a dreadful bore. They were very careful of their complexions, and their fine sense of propriety would not suffer them to look at an undraped work of art. They thought, as did Miss Stubbes, that there was something strange and shocking in a girl setting up for an artist. They stared at Junia when she was introduced to them. Miss Stubbes had painted Junia's character beforehand. This was a girl who set up for being an artist. This was a girl who drew from living models, and modelled in clay, wearing a cotton blouse, and soiling her hands. This was a girl who spent days in galleries and studios, and was constantly running about the country with a big lout of a brother. She could neither knit, nor net, nor crochet, nor embroider, nor do any useful feminine thing.

She was a dead weight in society. She could not play at chess, or draughts, or dominoes. "And I don't believe," said Miss Stubbes, "that she knows one card from another."

Which was all quite true. Poor good-natured Conny Graham's reiterated assurances that Junia Berrington was a very nice girl indeed, fell unheeded before this catalogue of faults detailed by her cousin. The models of propriety resolved to have as little to say to Miss Berrington as possible. People who set up for being artists, and who drew and painted from models, were not at all the style of people they would choose to know at home. Junia, finding her efforts at conversation ill received, soon took refuge in silence and her own thoughts. "How dull it was, sitting opposite Miss Stubbes!" was the burden of them. She longed to yawn. She longed to get out of the carriage and stretch her legs, and have a run, or climb up behind that rock where pretty ferns peeped out. If June were but there she would do it. How she longed for June! Why had they not invited him?

Were June but there she would not feel so stifled, so extinguished. The day became flatter and duller, and Junia began to feel as if her jaw would break with trying not to yawn. At Vallombrosa the rain began to pour, and there was a hurry and fuss to get under shelter, in the midst of which Miss Stubbes missed a hamper containing a Yorkshire ham, and declared that the monks must have stolen it, and that it was Junia's fault, because she had begged her to have an eye upon that hamper. It was so mortifying to be snubbed and scolded thus before all those strangers that Junia nearly cried. While the rest of the party were being shown over the church and convent, she did get away by herself and cry. Mr Kinnaird, who had not been present while Junia was getting her scolding, missed her from the party, and went to look for her.

"I have been looking for you everywhere," he said, as he came upon her in her retreat.

Now it seemed as if the one thing to complete her mortification was, that Mr Kinnaird should see her cry. "Why could he not have stayed away?" she thought, with impatience, as she wiped away her tears.

"If you come here with a message from Miss Stubbes, I won't take it," she said, with an air of defiance, assumed to hide her confusion.

"I have no message from Miss Stubbes; I came on my own account. I missed you, and came away to look for you. Has Miss Stubbes been making you cry? Surely not," he said, with a smile.

"It was silly, I know; but she has been scolding me, and so—I did cry. Not much, though," said Junia, red and confused.

"Too bad!" Leicester Kinnaird muttered. Then aloud, "Miss Berrington, I do beg you will not allow yourself to be put out by an odious, hectoring old woman." Junia thought she had never heard him speak so fast, or seen him look so much in earnest. "You are the youngest of the party," he went on, "and I mean to protect you—if you will let me." As he spoke he placed her hand so that they stood arm in arm. "Come, Miss Berrington, forget it all, and smile again."

Junia clung willingly to his arm as to that of a friend in need. "But why should she be cross with me? I have done nothing. I knew nothing—really—about the hamper, or the ham." The mention of the ham awoke her sense of the ludicrous. That Mr Kinnaird should be standing close to her, arm in arm, offering his protection, and all because she had been scolded about a missing ham! "How could I have been such a goose as to cry for such a ridiculous reason!" she said, with a hearty laugh at herself. "But why was she so cross?" she asked, when her laugh was over. "Everybody seems cross to-day—cross and dull. Why is it?"

"Everybody?" said Mr Kinnaird, reproachfully.

"I did not mean you," Junia exclaimed. "You—you are kind—very kind." And she looked up at him and smiled.

She had not hitherto been prodigal of her smiles to Leicester Kinnaird. To be smiled on thus was a totally new sensation to him. He did not know when he had been so stirred. He felt for an instant as if this creature was indeed worth the trouble of taming and training; as if it would be intolerable to him that any man should train her and tame her except himself. Another man to be smiled on as she had just smiled on him? Perish the thought! He was going to say something: something which might pave the way to love-making, when—luckily, perhaps, as he thought, when reviewing the day afterwards—Miss Stubbes's voice was heard, shrilly calling—

"Mr Kinnaird! we are going to see the hall where the paintings are. Mr Kinnaird!"

Kinnaird was saved "by the skin of his teeth." How he took himself to task afterwards for that momentary losing of his head! How could he have been so schoolboyish? he asked himself. It was true that he felt ready to do, or to say, almost anything, if only she would smile upon him again, and so reproduce in him that unwonted sensation. But to have been actually brought to the verge of love-making before he had ascertained whether the girl would be portioned on her marriage, or have to wait till her father's death! Junia had not been aware of what he had been going to say: which may be taken as an infringement of the respectable tradition that a girl always knows by instinct when a man is going to make love to her. But then, again, she was not a common kind of girl. There are girls and girls. Anna was a specimen of one type, Junia of another.

"Come with me and be my cicerone, Miss Berrington," said Kinnaird, as Miss Stubbes made the cloister re-echo with her calling. "Let us keep out of the way of that ugly old woman." Thus he spoke, fully determined to keep away from actual love-making, as yet.

There was no love-making;—had he not determined within himself that he would not make love yet? But how the day was changed for Junia, by this man who would not make love to her! How good-natured he was to her all that afternoon, she thought, with gratitude, as the weather cleared up, and people began to stroll about and chat together. But that day was as nothing compared to the next day's ride to La Verina. The road was steep, and there were awkward places for even a sure-footed horse; and Junia, mounted on an animal which appeared by no means sure-footed, felt frightened, though she did not venture to say so. But Kinnaird looked at her face, and kept close to her side, regardless of the nervous shrieks of Miss Stubbes, who really was frightened too; the difference being that she showed it by being very cross, and that Junia showed it by being very silent.

There was not very much said on Kinnaird's part; indeed the road was not such as to promote conversation. But he succeeded in arousing in Junia an unmistakable interest in himself, which was just what he desired. Once get her thoroughly interested, and the rest might follow, or not follow, as he pleased. Meanwhile, it was very pleasant to watch Junia's colour come and go as it did now, whenever he addressed her.

The ride was a long one. Before it was

over, Kinnaird, from being the man she disliked most in Florence, had become, in Junia's eyes, the saddest, the most disappointed man in Florence. He was a man with a hidden source of misery, which had grown to be a part of himself, and which prevented his taking any interest in the things of this life. When Kinnaird gave her—as the nature of the road would permit—a sort of *réchauffé à la* Werther, Junia, who was quite ignorant of Werther's sorrows, imagined that the handsome languid Englishman spoke in order to ease his overcharged spirit. Youth, believing itself to be eternal, takes quite kindly to the idea of eternal grief. Had Junia been a woman of thirty, she would have bid him cheerily get over it. But Junia, the girl of seventeen, with her life yet hidden before her, and its story untold, was not the one to tell him to get over it. "Get over" an eternal grief! There would have been sacrilege in the bare idea. She pitied him more than she could express. He had repeated a verse about a gazelle, and Junia, she did not quite know why, found herself drawing the inference that he had loved some one who was dead—or else some one who had been faithless, and who was dead to him; and that this prevented him from having any object in life.

"I am so sorry for you!" she exclaimed, with eyes full of pity. "I have so many objects in life—a hundred, I do think. I wish I could give you one!" Then she felt a sudden shyness, and stopped short. Had she said too much? But he only cast an eloquent look at her and smiled and sighed, and stroked his horse's mane in a slow, meditative way. How pretty was that impulsive way of hers! How charming the blush and confusion which followed! Junia, who was looking the other way, saw neither the smile nor the look, but she heard the sigh. Poor Mr Kinnaird! How sorry she was for him! How mistaken she had been in disliking him, in setting him down for a trifler, a mere languid dandy, when he was only unhappy!

A quarter of an hour of absolute silence had followed. Junia felt too shy to talk.

Kinnaird did not talk, simply because he felt it was not worth while. There was no need just yet. It was not his way to hurry himself, and he felt sure now that he had matters quite in his own hands.

But—when the silence had lasted just long enough for Junia to begin to fear that she had somehow offended him—at a turn of the road which hid them from the rest of the party, he suddenly took her hand and pressed it to his lips, murmuring, "I shall never forget what you said just now. Some day, if I ever dared, I might ask you to give me an object in life."

Was it strange, if after that, Junia began to ponder over this man's sayings, wondering more and more what they meant? Was it strange, if she found herself drawing his face, rather than the face of her model? Was it strange that she told her mother nothing? No more strange than her blushing when she saw him at the end of the street. But she only wondered yet.

And Kinnaird thought that he really would make up his mind. Nay, subject to the proviso we know of, his mind was made up. From calling her in his thoughts "that poor little girl," he had come to call her "that sweet little girl." And he had come to feel that, if he really did marry her, he should not be throwing himself quite away.

CHAPTER V.

On the evening of the 28th of May, June and Junia might have been seen walking quickly down the street towards Casa Falconieri. The massive iron gate opened and clanged behind them. A few minutes later, a pale, thin, bright-eyed lad came slowly down the street, carrying an artist's sketching-box and easel. He stopped before the great gate, and looked up at the dim gilded shield which hung over it, surrounded by the coronet and the initial letter F.

"If he keeps his vow," the lad muttered, "and does not have the shield new gilt till the Austrians are out, *per Bacco*, it is likely to look duller than it does now—*Pazienza!*"

Taking a key from his pocket, he let himself in, not at the great gate, but at a side door, painted the same colour as the wall.

June and Junia had ascended the broad stone staircase which ended in a vestibule lined with the busts of former Falconieri. This pale, thin lad, the last of the house of Falconieri, climbed up a steep dark stair to the third storey, where his grandfather, the Marchese, lived under the hanging roof, alone, save for his grandson Carlo.

The old man was sitting alone in a great bare room which served both for dining and sitting room. Three heavy oak chairs were ranged on one side of a frescoed wall; on a bare oak table stood a majolica dish containing white beans and oil, a bowl full of green almonds, a flask of wine from the Marchese's vineyards, and a tall brass lucerna unlit.

"Supper is ready," said the Marchese as Carlo entered. As he spoke, he rose and lit one of the three lights of the lucerna. Carlo laid down his hat and easel, and drew two chairs forward; the Marchese unlocked a cupboard and drew from it a loaf nearly a yard long and as thick as his wrist, and they sat down.

"Where have you been?" the Marchese asked, when he had discussed half a plateful of beans. He was very old in appearance, with a bald head, sunken eyes, and a leathery look on his shaven face.

"To San Miniato. I have been making a set of sketches of Val d'Arno." He spoke in a low voice with a pathetic ring in it, half the effect of low spirits, half of physical fatigue.

"Did you meet June there?"

"He was there—with Junia. I was inclined to go and sit by them; but I changed my mind. They seemed quite content to be by themselves."

"Right, my boy," said the Marchese, as he helped himself to more beans. "Never give your company where it is not wanted." There was a pause. Carlo may have been laying the precept to heart, the Marchese would have said. He scarcely expected the next question.

"Grandfather, you had a sister once, had you not?"

"Yes."

"Was she beautiful?"

"I don't remember. She was many years older than I; I never saw her but once. She died at La Santissima Nunziata in the odour of sanctity. May her soul rest in peace!" he added, and crossed himself. Carlo did the same.

"I wish I had a sister. How I would love her!" Carlo exclaimed, with a sigh, as he laid his head down on the table. "I would love her, just as June loves Junia."

The Marchese was a little deaf, and did not catch the words; but he saw the gesture which accompanied them, and was instantly alarmed. Carlo was very dear to him on all accounts: dear as the last of his race; dear, because of his father, who had been cruelly done to death; dear, because he was the only human being whom the Marchese had to love—the only one whom, without proving, he could trust even half-way. For if mottoes can be written on hearts, that written on the heart of this old man with the leathery face, was, "All men are liars."

"You must be careful," he said, authoritatively. "You have walked too far in the heat, and may have got a sunstroke."

"I did not find it hot," said Carlo, sitting upright in his chair. "I am well enough. Only—it does tire one so to wish and wish for what one cannot have."

"Leave off wishing then."

"But"—Carlo dropped his voice—"are we to leave off wishing for freedom then, because we cannot have it?"

"Let us distinguish, my Carlo," the old man answered in the same undertone. "There are things attainable in this world, and things unattainable. To wish for the unattainable is a waste of power unworthy of a man. To wish for the attainable,—yea, even the waiting for it with hands tied and mouth stopped—even the seeing it afar off while we go down to the grave,—that is worthy of a man. There is no waste of power. How can waste be where there is discipline? Thus I wait—for the dawn of liberty. Thus I wish—for the kingdom of heaven."

"Yes." There was another pause; each sat and communed with his own thoughts. Each had his kingdom of heaven to wait for. Again Carlo spoke, timidly, as if some instinct warned him that his mind was not tuned in unison with the old man's.

"Grandfather, do you not think it must be a delightful thing to have some one who entirely belongs to you? some one who will always understand your feelings, and to whom you can tell all your thoughts?"

"No. To my mind such a thing would be anything but delightful."

"No? To me it seems as if it must be Paradise."

"A fool's Paradise. None but a fool will tell all his thoughts; none but a fool will wish his feelings to be always understood."

Carlo was silenced. He felt guiltily conscious, as he ate the last green almond in the bowl, that he was just such a fool as his grandfather had described. For he longed to be able to speak his thoughts, and to have his feelings understood, by one person in the world—one only. Just as June spoke his thoughts to, and was understood—nay, had his moods divined before he told them—by his sister Junia.

Half that afternoon he had lain under the shade of the cypresses by the graveyard-gate, watching afar off the brother and sister at their happy work. He knew that, had he gone up to them, they would have smiled and made place for him, and never let him feel that he was one too many. But Carlo would have felt it, though June had told him always to come to them when he was dull and wanted company. When Anna was there to make a third, Carlo was willing enough to make a fourth, though Anna knew no measure in teasing him in her pretty Lilliputian way. But Anna very seldom accompanied her brother and sister in their sketching expeditions. She was afraid of spoiling her complexion, and had not sufficient enthusiasm to undertake long walks which only had as their object a pretty view. Often without their suspecting it, Carlo had followed June and Junia into the country, and had watched them, sitting afar off, and wished that he had a sister Junia. It had not always been so. Time was when he had sat close to Junia, and laid his arm on her neck, and been called by her "dear little Carlo." Carlo was beginning to look back regretfully to that time, when they were all young children together, and he, the sickly little orphan boy, had called Mrs Berrington "mamma," and had been kissed by the beautiful Englishwoman with a fervour born of compassion. Already that time was receding into the past—that past which is covered with a golden haze. And a barrier had sprung up, which was growing and strengthening daily, and which Carlo could not define nor sweep away, any more than he could tell when or how it arose. He could only feel it and chafe at it.

When the supper was over, and the wine and the bread locked up, the Marchese lit his cigar, his one daily luxury. Carlo got his violin from its corner, and went and sat by himself on the oleander-tub in the balcony outside his room, where he could see the Berrington's loggia on the first floor, and the studio lit up for the evening drawing lesson.

His thoughts were morbid and gloomy—partly from the working of a new influence on his mind, partly from a sense of isolation which was the consequence of the bringing up he had had. He had never had any companions of his own age and nation, for his grandfather feared sending him to a public school, lest he should be brought under Austrian or Jesuitical influence. The only glimpses of family life which he had ever had were gained from his admittance to the society of the young Berringtons. Living with an absorbed, silent old man like his grandfather, feeling that the things he cared for most were such as would be tossed aside by the Marchese as vain and futile, these glimpses of a life where father, mother, and children habitually interchanged thoughts, and sympathised with moods, and understood feelings, were to Carlo as glimpses of Paradise—a Paradise which he could never neter. As he sat that evening, drawing forth plaintive notes from his violin, the thought came to him that he was a friendless creature, and that there was no good in life for him. His only friend was June. He had never had a chance of making any other. And June seemed to care less for him, and to be satisfied with Junia's society only, and more than ever absorbed in his sketching and painting.

"I," thought Carlo, "shall always be an outsider, a mere looker on." And the thought was a very bitter one.

But June, drawing in the studio, with Junia by his side, said—

"Why does not Carlo come down-stairs like a rational being, and draw, instead of sitting up there and making his violin squeak?"

Junia walked out on the loggia and conveyed the question. Carlo started up, his heart beating, his cheeks all aglow. His morbid bitter fancies had flown at the sound of Junia's voice. "I am coming, signorina!" he cried. He snatched up his drawing-box, and flew down-stairs with tremulous eagerness. His humble longing was satisfied for a while.

June did care enough for him to care for his society. That was everything to Carlo just then; for, when he was near June, he was sure to be near Junia.

When Carlo had retreated to his own room after supper, the Marchese—first extinguishing the lucerna—sat and smoked his cigar out. Then he rose and paced the room, thinking. After some time he lit the lucerna again, and searched in an old cabinet for writing materials. These were of the humblest description, and the ink had long dried up. After some trouble he succeeded in producing a pale fluid from the residue, an apology for ink which an English school-child would have thrown away. With it, however, the Marchese was content to write for an hour. He wrote eagerly and hurriedly; and when he had done, gathered up and read what he had written several times by the uncertain flame of the oil-light, saying to himself—

"This surely must strike home. If one could get this printed as a broad-sheet, and distributed privately, it might help to give a turn to the wheel. I will ask Paolo what he thinks."

He lit a fresh cigar, and smoked it, leaning out of the window. The wind wafted the smoke onward to another window on the same storey — the fifth from the one at which he stood. It was half open, and by it a man and woman were sitting, talking in a low voice.

The man was Paolo Grilli, described in Mr Berrington's *carta di soggiorno* as his son's tutor; the woman was his wife, Isabella Grilli, described in Mr Berrington's *carta di soggiorno* (by her maiden name of Sacchi) as his daughter's governess. They were Roman refugees.

Signor Paolo had been talking for some time in a peculiar, low, inward voice, the result of training and habit: the habit of a country where the very walls have ears; where a man's dearest friend might be the one to denounce him; where he dared not trust wife or child or father with his thoughts, if they were thoughts respecting liberty, good government, progress. Standing a yard off, none could have heard what Signor Paolo had been saying all this while, except the person to whom he addressed himself—his wife—who sat close to him, so that he could lean his elbow on her chair. He was saying—

"Is it plain to you now, my Isabella, why and how it is, that materialism is nought else than the unreasoning, blind worship of facts?"

"I think I begin to understand—a little," was the answer which came meekly, in deepest contralto, from a large pair of lips, garnished with an unmistakable black moustache. "But"—a pair of meek eyes looked up from under ferocious eyebrows—"I am so stupid, I dare-say I shall have forgotten every word by to-morrow, and then, my poor Paolo, you will have the trouble of going over it all again."

"*Pazienza!*" said Signor Paolo, patting his wife's hand with a hand so small and frail, that the pen seemed its only fit weapon. He was a little man, with a broad bald forehead, small delicate limbs, and a manner which appeared to those who did not know him, painful in its nervousness. The room in which he sat with his wife was furnished with articles of even a meaner description than those which composed the furnishing of the Marchese's sitting-room; with this difference, that whereas the Marchese had but one lucerna in his room, and was chary of spending its light, in Signor Paolo's room there were two lucerne on the table, each with its three burners alight. Signor Paolo had been in a Roman dungeon. That was why he loved a bright light, even to the shutting out of tender twilight, and the light of moon and stars, or even the soft perfumed darkness of a summer's night. When a man's eyes have been trained against his will to see a spider crawl on the wall in the dark, he hates the darkness ever afterward. So it was with Signor Paolo. How he came to have had such an experience of darkness may be told in fewest words. He had been suspected—only suspected—of writing a letter to Mazzini.

"*Pazienza!*" he repeated, looking steadily where the six burners made the brightest spot of light. "You have no want of intelligence, my Isabella, only it has never been cultivated."

Signora Isabella shook her head. " It never will be, I fear. One cannot understand these things without thinking about them ; and I am always thinking how I shall manage to make both ends meet. And sometimes I don't do that, with all my thinking. But after all, my Paolo, if I did understand all you say about the Ego and Collective Humanity, and—and—human solidarity, it would not help me to make one day's portion of macaroni do for two."

" Man does not live by bread alone," said Signor Paolo.

" But without bread he will not live at all,' said the Signora with alacrity. " I have been thinking what you will do when you no longer have your pupils. June will only want you for a year longer, or perhaps a year and half; Edward is soon to be sent to England to school; Carlo——"

" That reminds me—I wanted to speak to the Signor Marchese about Carlo. Before I forget again, let me make a knot in my handkerchief."

While Signor Paolo was making a fifth knot, and trying to remember the meaning of the four already in his handkerchief, his wife looked out of the window. In the darkness she heard the voice of the Marchese saying, slowly and stealthily—

"Signora, I have two words to say to Paolo."

Signora Isabella gave a start, but recovered herself and drew in her head slowly. She whispered to her husband, "Our neighbour says from his window that he has two words to say."

Signor Paolo appeared surprised, but said, "Let him come."

His wife went to the window, waiting till the passing puffs from the cigar assured her the Marchese was indeed looking out, before she pronounced the single word, "Come!" Then shutting the window she drew a curtain before it, took the lucerne and placed them on a shelf on the wall near the window, so that no shadows should be seen upon the curtain from outside. Then she opened a door which communicated with the Marchese's apartments, whispering however—from sheer habit—before she turned the key in the lock, "Who is there?" From sheer habit, the Marchese answered, "Friends!" before he entered. Handing what he had just been writing to Signor Paolo, he desired him to read it.

It was a short stirring appeal to the Florentines to remember Curtatone. It was signed, "The father of one who was slain by Austrian bullets in Piazza Santa Croce, May the twenty-ninth, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-one."

Signor Paolo read it, drew a long breath, and laid it on the table. Seeing by the Marchese's attitude that he expected an opinion, he said, briefly, "*Benissimo.*"

"You think it strikes home?" said the Marchese, eagerly.

Signor Paolo nodded. His wife had taken up the paper and was reading it. "Poor dear old man," she murmured, her eyes filling with tears of sympathy — "to think his only son should have been shot like a dog!" She handed the manuscript to the Marchese, saying, "In my poor opinion it is beautifully written. Are you going to have it printed?"

"That is why I wished to speak to Signor Paolo. What do you think, Paolo? Could we trust Galletti? He has always appeared a well-disposed safe man."

Signor Paolo bent forward, and whispered, with a pause between each sentence, "Galletti has two spies in his printing-office. He does not know it. I dare not tell him."

Signora Isabella turned pale. The Marchese took out his handkerchief and wiped his face. Indignation overcame his habitual prudence. "Can we trust no one, not even Galletti?" he cried.

"No one—not even Galletti," Signor Paolo answered, quietly.

The Marchese stood silent for a moment. "Those Austrians! How long will God suffer them?"

Signor Paolo spread out his hands. "How should I know?" he said, in his habitual low voice. "Why ask me, Signor Marchese? Ask God!"

"Ah!"

The Marchese would have added a word or two to the exclamation, but something in Signor Paolo's demeanour seemed to forbid further comment. The man's attitude was altogether that of one who had sat and waited. The old Tuscan had waited too, but his waiting had not comprised years in a dark dungeon. In this respect he felt himself less worthy than Paolo the Roman, who once, like thousands of Romans, had trusted the man who called himself the Vicar of Christ.

The Marchese bowed his head, muttering the never-ending Tuscan refrain, "*Pazienza!*" Bowing low to Signora Isabella, he left the room, accompanied by Signor Paolo.

"A word about Carlo," said the latter, as he closed the door of the sitting-room. "I wish you would send him to Pisa."

"To Pisa? What has he been doing?"

"He is becoming an Anglo-maniac. All the work he does for me is perfunctory. His heart is in his colour-box. His colour-box is in the English boy's studio."

" It might be in a worse place."

" It might be in a better. You know what you wish him to become. I know what he is not. By the by, let him read that paper before you burn it. It may be the sowing of a seed."

The Marchese smiled sadly. " Shall I ever see the harvest ? I am getting an old man, Paolo."

" Live for four or five years longer. The Falconieri are a long-lived race, I have heard."

" Four or five years ? " and the old man's eyes twinkled in their sunken sockets. " Is that all ? "

" It is but a guess. Do not take it for more than it is worth. I am not a man given to guessing. Good-night, Signor Marchese."

He disappeared, and was presently heard barring and locking his doors for the night.

When Carlo re-entered the sitting-room, his grandfather said, " Remember the Requiem Mass to-morrow. The twenty-ninth."

" True, grandfather. I had not forgotten it ; nor have the Berringtons. We were talking about it in the studio, and wishing that we Florentines dared do anything to show we had not forgotten it. We were wishing that we dared show that we remembered both massacres—that of Curtatone, and that of the commemoration day in Piazza Santa Croce—when poor papa was killed."

"Ah! So you talk of those things down there, do you?"

"Often, often! And not in whispers, as you and Signor Paolo do, but as loud as you please."

"Have a care; have a care," said the old man. "Remember that the Berringtons have Italian servants."

"But we speak in English when we speak of liberty, and the oppression of Austria, and such things."

"Well, well." But the Marchese was not half satisfied. "Spies know all languages," he added. "You must be careful, Carlo. You have been speaking far too loud since you came up-stairs—far too loud. You must become more prudent."

"But indeed, dear grandfather——"

"More prudent, else you may lead to the imprisonment and death of men more worthy to live than you or I."

Carlo was awed. "I will be prudent," he said, almost in a whisper.

The Marchese took the manuscript address from his pocket. "I had written these few words," he said, "and would have had them printed to-night and distributed in the Piazza to-morrow; but Paolo advises me to burn them, and I believe he is right. But he wishes me to let you see them first."

Carlo took the manuscript, conned it over attentively for some moments, and handed it back to the Marchese, saying, "You may burn it now, grandfather, for I have got every word by heart. Yes, it is well to be reminded of these things sometimes."

They separated. Carlo waited in his room till he heard the lock turn in the Marchese's bedroom door. Then, springing up, he struck a light, and began to write as follows:—

"*Memoranda for the twenty-ninth of May.*

"On the twenty-ninth of May, one thousand eight hundred and forty-eight, Radetsky, at the head of thirty-five thousand Austrians, beat Langier, at the head of two thousand four hundred and eighty-two Tuscans, at Montanara and Curtatone.

"The *Statuto* of Tuscany was solemnly confirmed on the twenty-sixth of June, one thousand eight hundred and forty-eight.

"On the twenty-ninth of May, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-one, the mass for the dead at Curtatone was forbidden at Santa Croce.

"Armed police fired on the people inside the church.

"Armed police fired on the people in the Piazza.

"The *Statuto* was violated. Florentines were flogged.

"That the names of Curtatone and Montanara might be forgotten, the bronze tablets in memory of the slain were removed.

"Tuscans! Grave those names on your

hearts, and let the Austrians remove them if they can!

"So says the father of one slain in Piazza Santa Croce, the twenty-ninth of May, one thousand eight hundred and fifty-one."

On the next day, the 29th of May, Signor Paolo was taking his early morning stroll down Lung'arno, when he observed at a little distance three men dressed like workmen, with their heads close together, comparing notes, it seemed, over three sheets of paper. Approaching them, he courteously asked for a light for his cigar from one of them who was smoking. The request was granted with equal courtesy. As the two faces approached each other for the purpose, each thought as nearly as possible the same of the other, and made as nearly as possible the same mental comments on the act which brought him into this momentary juxtaposition with a stranger. Signor Paolo thought: "He looks an honest man, though as likely as not he is a spy. What then? A spy's pipe is as good as any to light my cigar. It saves me a match, and a match saved is a match gained. *Basta!*"

The workman's thought ran thus: "He looks honest enough. Very likely he is a spy. *Basta!* he wants to save his matches, so do I. The tobacco will smoke just as well. Tobacco is incorruptible."

Signor Paolo gave a whiff to his cigar, then pointing to the three sheets of paper, inquired, "Anything amusing, friends?"

"Amusing!" was the exclamation in tones of indignation.

"Look here at this memorandum," said the eldest of the group, putting his paper into Signor Paolo's hand.

"They are all the same; we picked them up just now."

Signor Paolo glanced at the paper, which he held daintily between his finger and thumb. Then returning it to the man who had handed it to him, he said, "I would advise you to throw them down again."

"Perhaps that would be prudent," the man said; and the two others chorused the "perhaps." "Nevertheless," he continued, quietly but firmly, "it is all true; and nothing can make it false. *Diamine! Signori miei,* I who speak had a son—an only son—and he died at Curtatone. *Basta!*"

A thrill of emotion ran through the group. The first impulse of each of the other three was to grasp the hand of the speaker; but the impulse was repressed by the thought common to all three: "Perhaps the man is an Austrian spy, set to talk thus on purpose to make us talk."

The thrill of emotion spent itself in a sterile "Ah!" which could compromise nobody. Signor Paolo raised his hat, with a courteous "good-morning" all round, and walked on.

"Master Carlo," he said, inwardly, as he puffed his cigar, "to Pisa you must go. You are getting in my way. I will have no sowing at an untimely season,—no interference with my plans by your plans, forsooth! That such a sickly little dreamer should have power to imperil men with brains! Lucky the police don't know your handwriting as well as I do."

One by one the three workmen separated. One by one the three papers dropped, fluttering, into the Arno.

Thus ended Carlo Falconieri's first act of independence.

CHAPTER VI.

The evening party, which had been to Anna Berrington a source of the greatest reassurance,—inasmuch as she had told herself when writing her mother's invitation cards, that in itself it was proof that there could be nothing the matter,—this evening party, as it turned out, was to be the last party in Florence for the season. Everybody was flying from the heat; and everybody was talking of the cholera which, the Italian papers declared, was not at Leghorn.

The rooms were brilliantly lit up, and were crowded to their utmost. Mrs Berrington moved about, a beautiful pale shadow of her eldest daughter. Anna, always her mother's chief aide-de-camp, flitted hither and thither, full of vivacity and a Lilliputian grace peculiarly her own, delighted to see everybody—delighted that the rooms were so full,—in a word, on the best terms with herself and the whole world.

At a great party there are always some unfortunate beings, who, having once got stuck in corners, remain there. Sometimes they remain because they have not courage to get out; sometimes because they have found something to sit upon; sometimes because they are dull and have nobody to speak to in the crowd. At her mother's parties, Junia tacitly assumed charge of these dull and obscure sitters in corners. But this evening, instead of being occupied in making the "nobodies" talk, she sat in a corner herself, and it was there that Anna found her.

"You moping!" Anna exclaimed. "What is the matter?"

"Nothing; I am quite happy," said Junia, with a contented smile. Yet she looked towards the door, as if expecting some one. It was getting late. Would Mr Kinnaird come?

"I wish you would go and look after that fat woman sitting by the Louis Quinze table in the next room," said Anna. "I saw her yawning as I came in. Miss Stubbes brought her here, and introduced her to mamma. Pity she doesn't entertain her, I think. We have quite enough to do to entertain our own friends."

"I will go presently," said Junia, as Anna moved away. But still she sat and waited.

On this evening Carlo was among the number of those who sat in corners. But he was not moped or dull; he was admiring the set of June's coat, and wondering what was the matter with his own. The set of his coats and ties had just of late greatly exercised Carlo's mind. He had obtained as a great favour from his grandfather that the new suit he at that moment wore might be made by the English tailor who supplied Mr Berrington and his sons. There had been some sharp words from the Marchese when Carlo first mentioned his wish—sharp words and curt denial, and then, soon following, a concession. Altogether, the matter had been made to assume more importance than it was worth, and Carlo had all the feeling of satisfaction which could be gained by choosing his own tailor, mingled with a sense of shame at having done what his grandfather stigmatised as an unpatriotic act—that of spending money on a foreign tradesman. But Carlo's satisfaction was short-lived. June's coat was a perfect fit; his own a misfit. So he sat in a corner, and admired June, who moved about among the guests, with a word here and there, quite taking the place of his absent father, Carlo thought, affectionately. What would he not give if his coats could be made to fit as June's fitted him!

Smitten with a desire to emulate June, Carlo had risen, intending to try and make himself agreeable to an old lady who sat in a corner (the same who had been noticed by Anna); but catching sight in a mirror of one of the wrinkles in the back of his coat, he hastily sat down again, disgusted and mortified. Better a hermitage, with a quiet mind and frock of serge with rope tied round, than a gilded drawing-room, with chandeliers blazing and bright eyes sparkling, and ices *ad libitum*, if one must wear a coat like this!

Thus thought Carlo at the first stab of wounded vanity. But soon a salve came to him, supplied out of his own inner consciousness. What was a coat, compared to the man who lived inside the coat? Had any one of these men and women, who filled the rooms, painted and frescoed for his ancestors' delight, a pedigree like his own? Where were their ancestors in the year one thousand two hundred and ninety-five? Where were the Berrington's ancestors? The Berringtons could only carry back their family pedigree for three hundred years; whereas, in the thirteenth century the Falconieri were already rich and powerful enough to refuse the architect Arnolfo the ground he wanted for the nave of Santa Maria del Fiore!

"Ay, stood I here in rags," thought Carlo, "I should still be greater than they." In that moment of proud consciousness—the consciousness of being a Falconieri in the midst of upstarts—he rose, determined to be gracious, as became a scion of such ancient nobility. He felt annoyed with himself for having hesitated to speak to any of these people.

There was a Russian princess somewhere in the rooms. He would make June introduce him to her. What was a Russian princess, that he should feel shy at addressing her? Perhaps her grandfather was a serf, thought Carlo, in his sublime ignorance. There was an English baronet there, whose great-grandfather had been a clothier. He would be gracious to him, as became one who had a grand past to look back on (Carlo would have spelt that past with a capital P).

And yet Carlo, as he stood up quite clear of the arm-chair in which he had hidden the offending back of his coat,—Carlo could not help feeling that these yellow-haired, red-necked, broad-shouldered creatures,—these islanders who crowded the doorways,—were better types of manhood than he was, or could ever hope to be. Why were his shoulders so narrow, and his hands and feet so small? But the other day Junia's glove had fitted him. He had felt pleased, then. But now!

Suddenly from a doorway opposite entered a god, a veritable Apollo in evening dress; smiling a god-like smile, wearing exquisite gloves, and a tie before which Carlo stood transfixed. Instinctively he put up his hand to his neck. He longed to get the secret of such a bow as that. How was it given to some men to spoil ties for half an hour, and to others to be successful at the first trial. Very small and insignificant Carlo felt himself as he watched this wonderful being, with whom June shook hands as if he were not at all impressed. He watched him as he went from one to another, nodding, smiling, shaking hands—languidly, as became such a being. For he was, strictly, not a Hercules. He did not show brute force at every step he took, as some of these islanders did. What strength there was in him was dissimulated by exquisite grace. Carlo sighed: how he wished to be like this man! The next minute he sighed at the futility of the wish. Why was it that he was always wishing for the unattainable?

Some one seemed to echo the sigh. He turned, and saw Junia standing near him. She too had been contemplating the wonderful being. Junia was looking very beautiful this evening, Carlo thought. A bright colour was in her cheeks, and she smiled as if she were very happy. She started when Carlo spoke.

"Signorina, who is that man?"

"Which man, my Carlo?" she said, as if in a dream.

"He to whom June has been speaking. Now he is speaking to the Signorina Anna. See! That handsome man."

Junia's colour brightened as she answered, "That is Mr Kinnaird, an acquaintance of papa's."

"Kinnaird? Kinnaird? I seem to know the name."

"It is a Scotch name."

"I remember," Carlo rejoined; "I remember hearing you say, a long time ago, to the Signorina Anna, that you did not like Mr Kinnaird. Is that the same?"

"I never could have said anything so absurd," said Junia, with a look of annoyance, as she moved away.

Carlo was boyish enough to wish to follow her, and prove to her that she had said so. But Mrs Berrington came in and stopped him, with a request that he would play a Beethoven trio, which he had been practising with June and Junia. There was but one copy of the music, and he had taken his part up to his own room, and had forgotten to bring it down that evening. There was a great crowd in the doorway next the staircase, and he went out on the balcony, where he could enter June's room by the open window, and from thence get up to his own room by a steep narrow back-stair, and back again the same way. He found his music in the dark, and ran downstairs with it. But he was obliged to stop in June's room to take breath. "More haste, worse speed," he thought, panting, and leaned on the wall next the window, so that the night air might play on his flushed face. Standing so, he perceived that the balcony was no longer untenanted. In the darkness he could just see a seated female figure, with a man bending over her. This group blocked up Carlo's way to the reception-rooms. He must either wait till the way was clear, or return to the third storey, whence he had just come, and make his way down by the grand staircase. From the open drawing-room windows came the sound of many voices. Two performers were making a noise on the piano. Carlo thought that he would stop where he was; by the time that duet was over he should have got cool, and perhaps the people on the balcony would be gone.

Somebody said, looking out, "I am sure I saw Mr Kinnaird. Is he gone already?" Then a curtain which had been looped up fell, and the sounds of the piano became muffled, and the talking seemed more distant.

The man's voice said, "I feel much indebted to the person who let that curtain fall. What a horrid clatter those people are making! I should like to make a law abolishing all pianos."

There was an interval of conversation carried on in a low tone—so low, that only the hissing sounds told Carlo that the language used was English. Carlo listened to the duet afar off. The performance had reached the last movement, and would soon wind up with a crash, he thought. Then there was one of those lulls in conversation which happen sometimes. It was as if the players had at last tired out the talkers. Carlo, listening with satisfaction to the rapidly ending duet, heard the man on the balcony say, "—— But I could not go without just one word, to tell me whether I dared hope. Ah, do not turn away!"

Carlo stood, shaking with inward laughter, ready to cry "*Encore!*" to this love-scene, which was being acted under his very eyes. His ignorance only saw pure fun, where lay all the elements of a tragedy. There was not time for him to remember that he was an eavesdropper. The speaker resumed, earnestly—

"—— One word. Let me tell you that

you are more to me than ever woman was before. Junia, dearest, speak to me. No, do not take away your hand."

Junia! Carlo almost said the name aloud in his astonishment. Was it Junia that was being made love to in this manner? His astonishment quickly gave way to anger and disgust; for Junia—it was indeed she—let her hand lie in her lover's. Her voice murmured something, Carlo knew not what. Then in the darkness came the sound of a kiss. Carlo stood, turning hot and cold. All the comedy was over—the tragedy had begun; for, as that man kissed her, Carlo knew, by the indignation which possessed him, that he himself loved Junia.

But she let the man kiss her. She loved him. Nothing more was needed to complete Carlo's misery. He went and threw himself on June's bed, and wished himself dead.

But the Beethoven trio had to be played. June's voice was heard in the now empty balcony calling for him.

He got through his part somehow, and was thanked and complimented by Mrs Berrington. Then the man whom he had so much admired for his Apollo-like grace came up and complimented Junia; and from the look which passed between them, Carlo knew that this was the man who had gained her love. He clenched his hands in a rage. This man, whose kiss she had taken so contentedly, was the same Kinnaird whom she had said once she did not like. What did she mean by that? And he! his confession of love to her had been a confession that he had loved other women before! Was that the sort of love that Junia cared to have? Did she not feel herself worth more than that? Carlo would have turned away, but he could not help looking at her. She stood leaning on the piano, in the attitude of a listener. Kinnaird stood by her side, looking proud and satisfied. In her face there was that look of ineffable happiness which can come but once in a lifetime — which never comes to some faces—for it is not given to all to stand on life's pinnacle at once, as Junia did. Carlo looked and looked, till from anger he fell to hopelessness and heart-sickness. Was it any wonder ? Was she not beautiful ? Was her lover not handsome ? "Why have I grown up so small and thin ?" thought Carlo, with that feeling of despair which takes possession of us when we know that things will not alter, and there is no help nor remedy for them.

When Junia turned away the spell was broken. Carlo could not bear to take leave like the other guests. Ever since he had been invited to their parties—and that had been first to children's parties when he was quite a little boy—he had been accustomed to stay after the guests were gone, and talk over the evening, as if he were one of the family. But he had no heart now for what used to be the pleasantest part of the evening. He went out quickly into the corridor, where there was the usual stir, people calling for their carriages, and the great door opening and shutting. In the midst of this stir Mr Berrington walked in, and instantly the stir became a commotion ; the servants flew hither and thither, one calling on the other to tell Mrs Berrington, the older ones crowding round to kiss Mr Berrington's hand. Carlo stood aside to let him pass. He did not wish to speak even to Mr Berrington, and excused himself by thinking that Mr Berrington looked ill, and was doubtless too much fatigued to wish to speak to him. He crept up-stairs, where there was certainly nothing to keep him from feeling as dismal as he had a mind to. How dilapidated the walls were as soon as he got beyond the Berrington's part of the house! The fresco was peeling off in the sitting-room; the stairs were unswept; the tiled floor was cracked and discoloured. Everything around was mean and bare and ugly, Carlo thought; and he had grown up like the place he lived in. In less than four years he would be one-and-twenty. "Was he to live in that wretched owl's nest all his life?" he asked himself, in a rage. It seemed to him as if his having always lived in that owl's nest had had something to do with Junia's loving Mr Kinnaird. Had he but known, how long since would he have told her! But how should he know? Who can tell the day on which the sown seed begins to grow? It came upon Carlo all at once that this world was a horribly crooked place. What would he not have given to have seen Junia's face beam so for love of him! And what a different tale would have been his to tell her! Would he have had to say that he had loved some other women first?

He went to bed, but he could not sleep, and turning and tossing became so intolerable that at last he rose and dressed himself and went down into the garden. The lights were all out, and the house was silent. He paced up and down, but the garden seemed too small: he climbed a gate at the farthest end and got out near the Cascine. When there, he walked on and on, past the ice-houses, past the tall stone-pine which stood in an open space by itself. He could not bear to go back. If he could but keep away, hidden somewhere, till the Berringtons were gone to the Bagni, it would not be so bad. But to be there, close to them—to hear Mr Kinnaird spoken of—to see him sitting close to Junia, perhaps,—all this, he thought, would be more than he could bear. But we are all bound. We can but run the length of our chain, and pull and chafe and then give in. Carlo gave in at last. The matin bell tolled from the belfry of Santa Maria Novella; the moon went down; a damp moisture rose from the earth; a sickly odour filled the air; strange sounds came from the brushwood which bordered the path. The place seemed like a weird wilderness; Casa Falconieri appeared like the garden of Eden, with Eve there and the serpent. It became darker and colder every moment, with the chill and the darkness which precede the dawn; and Carlo, shivering, groped his way homeward. The peasants were coming in already from Porta al Prato, with their carts and calves and lambs; the women plodding along with their burdens—live fowls tied by the legs in bunches. "*Ohimè!*" thought Carlo, with a glimmer of compunction, as he dragged himself along. "How patiently the dumb beasts take it! They are bound and carried whither they would not, and they do not complain!"

"*Felice giorno,* Signor Marchesino!" said the gardener, as Carlo passed through the gate which he had lately climbed over. "*Felice giorno!*" grinned the footmen Gigi and Cecco, flapping their long feather brushes out of the window. "*Felice giorno!*" said every one he met as he went up-stairs. But the kindly words seemed a horrible mockery to Carlo. He believed that his eyes were opened, and that he could see the misery which ran through and around everything in this world. There ought to be no such word as felicity. The only salutation worth the utterance was the Trappist greeting — "Brother, we must die!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE next day grew and went on to its end.

A strange hushed silence seemed to fill the house and garden.

On the street side little knots of people met, gesticulated, and parted. Brothers of the Compagnia della Misericordia passed, bearing the ominous black litter on their shoulders. The way was made clear for them with more than common Italian alacrity; women averted their heads and shuddered, crossing themselves as they passed.

"*Felice giorno!*" said Nunziata, the old deaf woman who came daily to perform what service the Marchese was unable to dispense with. Ever since 'Forty-eight he had had no servant to live in his house. There was so much less danger of harbouring Austrian spies, he said. Besides being old and deaf, Nunziata was illiterate, being neither able to read nor write; which doubled her value in the Marchese's estimation.

"Good-morning!" said the old woman. "Has the Signorino Marchesino slept well?" This was to Carlo, who entered, expecting a reproof from his grandfather for having overslept himself. Poor boy! his morning sleep had been very heavy after that night of wandering in the dark, unwholesome Cascine; but he felt unrefreshed and more unhappy if possible than the night before. The Marchese was not there. Nunziata informed Carlo, with some excitement, that his lordship had heard the great bell of the Misericordia just after daybreak, and had dressed to obey its summons without a moment's delay—not even for the cup of coffee which Nunziata would have prepared for him. And then she told Carlo that the cholera had come at last.

"Ten died last night in the San Frediano quarter," she said; "and I saw the Misericordia bringing out two more as I was coming here this morning. They were taken to the hospital, of course. But what! Hospital or no hospital, they will die just the same. They say that at Leghorn the people are dying like flies; and so they will here, now they have begun."

"Are you afraid?" said Carlo, listlessly.

The old woman parried the question. "We must all die one day, as your lordship knows. To-day is my turn, to-morrow yours. But they say that the cholera is like purgatory. Now one does not want to be in purgatory twice, Signor Marchesino. I gave a *paul* to a young priest I know, to say a Mass for me. He said it was very cheap, but he didn't mind doing it for me, you understand, because his grandmother and I had been friends when we were young. It is well to be beforehand; the price of Masses will rise, like everything else, if this state of things goes on. Signor Marchesino, will you not have the windows shut?"

"No," said Carlo; "it is not time yet. The sun is not so hot."

"Well, some people say the cholera is in the air, and you should keep all the windows shut. At Leghorn they say the Jews poisoned all the wells. Perhaps they did. Who knows ?"

"Grandfather says dirt brings the cholera," said Carlo, who, while Nunziata had chattered, had got through a reasonable portion of bread and coffee, notwithstanding his misery.

"Dirt!" was Nunziata's incredulous exclamation. "What should dirt have to do with it ? Your lordship is making fun of me."

"I neither know nor care anything about it ; I only tell you what my grandfather says."

The old woman muttered something in dissent, and looked out of the window.

"There are some of the brotherhood coming down the street. I wonder whether his lordship the Marchese is among them ! Did you ever try to distinguish the people you knew when they had the black *cappa* on ? One should know his lordship by his stately walk."

"*Che bestia!* What an old fool you are, Nunziata, when you know they wear that *cappa* just to keep them from being recognised !"

"I'm not such a fool as your lordship thinks," said Nunziata. "A man I know—he is brother-in-law to my next-door neighbour's second husband,—he recognised his Highness the Grand Duke under the *cappa* once. So why not his lordship the Marchese? *Ahi!* If I had black eyes and red cheeks and white teeth, like that contadina down yonder in the street, your lordship would not cry out '*Che bestia!*' when I speak. No!"

"Fool!" Carlo muttered to himself. Sometimes Nunziata's chatter amused him: that was when the gregariousness natural to man made him feel that a fool's company was better than none. Just now he felt that any company, wise or foolish, was intolerable. He went and locked himself up in his room.

Down in the loggia the lattice-blinds were drawn. Behind them Junia sat in the shade and sang—

"E quando sarò morta allor direte . . ."

Carlo stopped his ears at first; but soon he found himself listening. How was it that she, the lovely, the beloved one, sat alone, singing the lay of the dying, love-sick maiden? He would speak thus, indeed, were he on his deathbed, dying for love of her.

"And she is happy," thought Carlo. "She would laugh at me, I know, if I said to her, 'Junia, you are singing my song—the song of love and death. Sing on, for I am dumb.' Yes, she would laugh, would call me 'little Carlo,' and bid me not talk nonsense. Happiness makes people cruel, I think. How long will she go on singing, like that?" The wind blew aside one of the blinds and gave him a glimpse of Junia, in a beautiful gauzy dress, that waved about her like a sunset cloud as she sat. Her hair was tied up with pink ribbons; a red rose was fastened in her girdle. Carlo had never seen her look so lovely.

"Ah!" he groaned. "The red and the green: Hope and Love. I know why she looks like that. The Englishman is coming. She is waiting for him." There would be an espousal—a bridal. Presents and congratulations would pour in. Anna and Edward, perhaps June, would say, "What do you think of our new brother-in-law?" How should he bear all that? He shut his window and pulled the blind down, and threw himself on his bed, crying out that his misery was greater than he could bear. Yet he could not help hearing the long, sweet, full notes of Junia's song that floated upwards from the loggia. It was so hot in the garden that the birds left off singing. The water was low and silent in the fountain; only the song floated upward, and Carlo could not shut it out. He left his room at last, and went and sat in the antechamber, which looked out on the broiling street.

Nobody came near him all day. The song had ceased long ago, yet its echo still filled his ears—

"E quando sarò morta allor direte. . . ."

A wind rose as the day went on. Towards the *Ave Maria* thunder-clouds began to hang darkly over the city. Bells which had been silent began to jangle; the streets became more crowded; monks passed by two and two;

beggars roused themselves up to whine and beg. A Misericordia brother was coming down the street with his begging-box, into which people eagerly dropped their *quattrini.* It was for the souls in purgatory. *Jesu Maria!* how could one tell when one might be grilling in purgatory one's self! And the water (they said) was getting so low in the Arno. A bad sign that!

The Frate came back slowly down the street. He entered every house, knocking at every door, with the words, "For the souls in purgatory—for the souls in purgatory!" Carlo's misery could not make him forget such claims. He took two *pauls* out of his purse, and went and stood on the stairs, that the brother might not have the trouble of coming all the way up. He was a tall man, and walked slowly. Two grey eyes looked out from the eyeholes, a thin hand held the box out, and shook it as the alms were dropped in, and the black figure went its way towards the end of the street. Nearly an hour afterwards, Carlo, still sitting at the window, saw his grandfather coming slowly down the street, followed at a little distance by Signor Paolo. These two, who belonged to a secret brotherhood which had for its aim the regeneration of Italy, never walked together, never greeted each other on the stairs, never stopped to speak in the street. Their meetings, when necessary, were held in Mrs Berrington's inner drawing-room. So careful were they not to be seen in each other's company, that Carlo took his lessons from Signor Paolo in a room belonging to the Berringtons, in a part of the house whither the Marchese never went.

Signor Paolo had told his wife of his advice to the Marchese to send Carlo to Pisa, and she had been in low spirits ever since because of it. How should they find bread to put in their mouths? she asked herself constantly. Would Collective Humanity refund her Paolo the money he lost by giving up such a pupil as Carlo? But that was a question her Paolo had not chosen to answer. And now he was coming home to a meagre supper of beans and oil! Signora Isabella hoped that when he found that the customary dish of *frutta* (cherries or raw peas, or green almonds when in season) was wanting, and that the flask of wine was sourer and thinner, he would think better of it, and not wish Carlo to go to Pisa —at least, not yet. Little she knew Signor Paolo! To him Carlo was but a means to an end: the end, not his own livelihood, but the regeneration of Italy. He threw Carlo aside as he threw aside an ill-made pen, without regret or afterthought. Enough that it was unadapted to his purpose.

That evening, while Carlo and his grandfather sat at supper, a loud knocking was heard at the door. Half frightened at a sound so unusual, Carlo went to open it, with the accustomed formula, "*Chi è?*"—who is it? and was relieved to hear, instead of a strange voice demanding entrance for the police, the word "*Amici*," in the voice of Signor Paolo. He went straight to the sitting-room without waiting to be announced. "Bad news!" he said, stopping short in the middle of the room. His face was very pale, and at the words he uttered the Marchese's face became pale likewise.

"What is it?" he asked, expecting to hear that a traitor to the brotherhood had been found out, or that the police had discovered the papers belonging to the fraternity in their hiding-place in Mrs Berrington's inner drawing-room.

"Mr Berrington is dead of cholera," Signor Paolo said.

Carlo started up with a cry, and would have left the room. His grandfather stopped him. "Where wouldst thou go?" he asked.

"Where?" cried Carlo, his voice breaking with sobs; "where, but to see those dear ones—to comfort them!"

"Stay here!" was the Marchese's peremptory order. "Your going will do no good, and you may bring the cholera back with you; ay, you may take it yourself—you, the last of the Falconieri!"

"What do I care for that?" Carlo cried.

"I care," the Marchese replied; "and I am master here. Listen! I am old and tough, and can go where I do not choose you to go. I shall go down there, and do what can be done, and say what need be said. Stay you here and go to bed; or, if you cannot do that, pray. Now is the time to find out whether you can pray or not."

Carlo did as he was bidden. There were times when the Marchese showed he was master, and this was one of them. Carlo tried to pray, but the shock of the surprise had stunned him, and benumbed his faculties, and he fell asleep on his knees before the Madonna and the crucifix which stood at the foot of his bed.

What a miserable day the next day was! The Marchese still forbade his going into the Berringtons' part of the house, and Carlo dared not disobey. The Marchese went away after breakfast, desiring Carlo to tell all who called that he would be back by the *Ave Maria.* But nobody came. Signora Isabella's door was locked; she, too, must be with the Berringtons, Carlo thought, when he knocked, intending to sit with her for an hour. He was afraid of being alone to-day, and went and sat by the window that looked on the street, where he could see life and motion, and forget for a minute now and then that death was in the house. He was not so much alone as he thought, for his grandfather and Signor Paolo were in the apartment of the latter, looking over and burning the papers which had been kept in Mrs Berrington's inner drawing-room. But Carlo did not know this, therefore his sense of loneliness was not mitigated. On the garden side the house was gloomy enough. The loggia blinds were drawn up, and the sun beat in on the closed doors and darkened windows. Already its fierce rays had burnt up the plants which Junia was accustomed to water daily. On the street side there was less gloom, because closed shutters are the rule in Italian houses most months of the year: nor can they ever be so connected with the idea of absence, sickness, or death, as in those northern climes, where every solar ray is a welcome guest.

Scarcely any but an Italian youth would

have been content, under any circumstances, to sit for a whole morning with his arms crossed on a window-sill. There Carlo sat, however, not feeling it a hardship that his grandfather's order should keep him a prisoner, except that he wanted to see the Berringtons. Towards the middle of the day a carriage with a lady in it, whom he recognised as Miss Stubbes, stopped at the gate of Casa Falconieri. She got down and went in, but presently reappeared, violently agitated, holding a smelling-bottle to her nose. The carriage had scarcely driven off before it was again stopped, and she made signs to Mr Kinnaird, who was coming down the shady side of the street in his dog-cart, to come and speak to her. There was an instant of voluble conversation, or more strictly, of voluble monologue, on the part of Miss Stubbes. Then she drove away, and Mr Kinnaird went slowly to the gate and rang. Carlo gave an envious sigh as he watched him, so faultless in dress and appearance, and with such a beautiful grave face. There was the man who presently would go into the bereaved house, and kiss and comfort Junia—his Junia. And he—he had loved other women before, and she was only one among so many!

"Every word that he will say to her," thought Carlo, "he has perhaps said to some one else!"

But, to Carlo's great astonishment, Mr Kinnaird did not go in. He waited at the gate till a servant came, gave a card, mounted his dog-cart, and drove off rapidly. Carlo wondered all day what was the meaning of it.

CHAPTER VIII.

KINNAIRD drove away from the gate of Casa Falconieri, feeling uncomfortable and disconcerted. He had expected anything rather than what Miss Stubbes had announced, and the Berringtons' servant confirmed. He had seen Mr Berrington for just one instant on the night of the party, and had thought him looking ill and worn out, but that was all. As he drove out of the street, a misgiving came into his mind. Ought he to have waited to learn whether Junia would see him or not, instead of merely leaving his card? His abstention from going in had been the first impulse of the man's true nature, which prompted him to avoid the sight and sound of suffering. But even politeness forbids such avoidance, such " passing by on the other side," at certain times and seasons; not to speak of a cheap tinselled Christianity, which most men of this century carry about with them, and which does well enough to serve a turn or two, though, like other imitations, there is no "wear" in it.

But Kinnaird's mind was more exercised by the thought that he had failed in good-breeding than that he had failed in Christian behaviour. (I take the two to be as nearly identical as possible, but to his mind they were very distinct.) He left half-a-dozen cards at as many houses, and then drove to Palazzo Gondi. He wished to find out what plans Miss Stubbes and Miss Graham had made. He himself had intended to take rooms at an hotel at the Bagni; from thence, naturally, to transfer himself to the Berringtons' villa, which he could make his head-quarters for the whole summer, if things turned out, as he had every reason to suppose they would, with regard to himself and Junia. But this death might upset all such pleasant summer plans: indeed, even supposing they still occupied the villa, he felt that he could not make one of a party with a disconsolate widow at its head. He was as much in love with Junia as it was possible to be; it was quite true what he had told her—that he had never loved any woman so much before. He was quite willing to do a considerable amount of love-making, yet he felt that he could not do it under such circumstances. But it was not Kinnaird's way to examine himself, or to dwell on what was unpleasant around him. By the time he reached Palazzo Gondi, he had persuaded himself that Junia would send for him if she wished to see him. Whether she did or not, he would write her a little note before the evening, and send it by his servant. As he walked through the long, dim vestibule which led to Miss Stubbes's drawing-room, he thought he would ask her for a cup of tea, and spend a quiet hour there before he went to dinner—to include a little flirtation with Conny Graham.

As he himself thought afterwards, he jumped from the frying-pan into the fire. We will say that he met with a very proper retribution. In avoiding the possibility of a scene, in which the girl he loved might have given way to her grief unrestrained, he fell into the midst of a scene in which a middle-aged woman was making herself hideous and ridiculous. He fell into it as into a trap, and could not escape.

Up and down the length of her drawing-room Miss Stubbes was walking,—hysterical, incoherent, declaring, with much iteration and expenditure of force, that she had had a shock from which she should never, never recover. Ever since she left the gate of Casa Falconieri, Miss Stubbes had been smelling strong salts ; her eyes were watering, and her nose already presented strong symptoms of excoriation. As the hot fit and the cold fit succeed each other in an ague-stricken person, so did the fit of shuddering and the fit of thanksgiving succeed each other in Miss Stubbes's mortal frame.

Constantia Graham sat by, more wide awake than usual. A brandy-flask and glasses stood on the table, and an odour of the vulgar fluid filled the drawing-room, overpowering even the bouquet of heliotrope on the console.

“I make no apology,” said Miss Stubbes, waving her handkerchief in the direction of the brandy-flask, on which Kinnaird’s eyes had rested with polite surprise as he entered. “In such awful times as these, Mr Kinnaird, I make no apology. You know yourself what a fearful shock I’ve had.”

“Poor Willy came home so awfully frightened,” said Miss Graham, in tones of concern. “She cannot get over it at all.”

“And I do say,” continued Miss Stubbes, fortifying herself with another sip, “that it was most inconsiderate of the family to allow any one to come near their door. They should have posted a servant down-stairs if the porter was out of the way.”

“O Willy! do you think the poor things were thinking of such a thing as that?” said Conny, with tears in her eyes.

"Very well, Constantia; but I suppose you'll allow that the living are of equal importance with the dead! We ought to have gone away last week; it was tempting Providence to stay on for the sake of Mrs Berrington's party. It was tempting Providence, if I had but known it."

"After all, Willy, you have a great deal to be thankful for. You said so yourself after you had read the paper."

Kinnaird looked up in surprise. What could that good-natured, stupid Conny mean?

"Yes, indeed, you are quite right, Conny. I wish to be reminded of my mercies. Where is that paper? Mr Kinnaird, do you know that it is the merest chance I am not standing before you a ruined woman?"

"Indeed!" was all Mr Kinnaird could say.

"Yes; until last winter I had nearly all my money invested in the Kercombe Bank. I took it out because I thought I could do better with it. My man of business thought I was a fool, I know. Now, which was the fool?—he or I? There's a bank at Bombay smashed, and the Kercombe Bank has smashed in consequence. Just think of that!"

"And poor, dear Mr Berrington is mentioned as one of the largest shareholders," said Conny, putting her handkerchief to her eyes.

"No! Is it—are you quite—quite sure?" said Kinnaird, shocked and annoyed all at once. Miss Stubbes pointed out the place and bade him read for himself, and observe that the paragraph was marked in pencil by the sender, who was connected with Kercombe people, and would know all about the bank affairs.

Kinnaird read, and handed the paper back. There seemed no doubt whatever about the matter. He felt it to be a great misfortune. Indeed, for a moment he almost felt as if it were he himself who had lost the money. He would have taken leave, but Miss Stubbes pressed him so warmly to remain and dine, that he consented. All dinner-time he was considering how he should write that note to Junia. He could not bear not to write it, yet he could not tell how, without committing himself, to make it a tender leave-taking. For to follow her to the Bagni now (if she went there) would be doubly impossible. He wished to leave matters so, that if it turned out that the Berringtons were not left badly off, he could come forward and never be suspected of having entertained a wish to draw back. But how?

Before dinner was over, Miss Stubbes, without knowing it, helped him out of part of his difficulty. Would he, she asked, go to Bagni early the next day, and choose rooms for them at the hotel, that they might have a place ready to rest in on their arrival? "For," said Miss Stubbes with emphasis, "after what I have gone through to-day, I do not feel equal to walking through one suite of rooms after the other, and haggling with the hotel-keeper. And those people always pretend to misunderstand me. And if I leave it to Conny, she'll give anything they ask."

Kinnaird undertook the commission with alacrity. Somehow it seemed easier to write to Junia when he would be out of Florence. In Florence, if he wrote, she might think it strange he did not go to her. He could not bear not to go if he remained where she was, neither could he bear to commit a piece of folly for which in another man he would have had the deepest contempt. Such folly would it be to bind himself irrevocably before he was sure of the girl's prospects. Yet it is not the less true that he felt very uncomfortable when he came to be actually leaving Florence; so uncomfortable, that he thought he would write to Junia the first thing on arriving at Bagni. But he did not. And on the next day he had an attack of gout, brought on by vexation, as he believed, and he could not write. Somehow, he did not get well very quickly, and the gout seemed to linger in his hand: and he persuaded himself that it hurt him too much to hold a pen.

CHAPTER IX.

All day Carlo wondered why Mr Kinnaird had turned from the Berringtons' gate. But it was sure, he thought, that he would come back next day, and Carlo took his place early by the window to watch for him. Nothing could come of such watching, he knew: still he wanted to see him go in, to be sure he was there, and imagine (he thought it was easy to imagine) what the Englishman would say to the girl he loved.

While he sat with arms crossed on the window-sill, the Marchese came to him, holding a paper in his hand. He showed it to Carlo.

"My boy," said he, with solemnity, "you are young and tender, but I think you are faithful—faithful to Italy."

“Yes, grandfather,” was all Carlo could say.

“See here. This paper contains a list of names and addresses. I have no longer a safe place to keep it in. Paolo says he cannot trust his memory as he did formerly, and I cannot trust mine at all. Yet it is of consequence that these names and addresses be correctly preserved. Carlo, your memory is excellent when you choose. Can I trust you to learn this list by heart for Italy's sake?”

“Yes, sir, indeed you may,” said Carlo, who knew well enough that the very existence of such a list was sufficient to endanger the liberty, and perhaps the lives, of those whose names were written on it.

“Good,” said the Marchese. “But can I trust you never to forget it as long as we want it?”

“If I say it every morning when I get up, and every night before I sleep, I shall never forget it,” said Carlo.

“Good again. But Carlo, you must sit and commit it to memory in your own room—not here, with a window open on the street, *diamine!* Suppose the wind should take it, or Nunziata come in and see you with it in your hand! She cannot read or write, 'tis true, but still! In fine, a thousand things might happen. To your own room, my boy, and lock yourself in."

Carlo obeyed with very reasonable alacrity. At any other time he would scarcely have been able to contain himself for joy at such a mark of confidence. For his grandfather must, he was sure, have consulted Signor Paolo before he would venture to give him such work as this to do; and Signor Paolo would never have consented had he not thought him entirely trustworthy. So that, after all, Signor Paolo's opinion of him was better than he chose to make it appear.

Down in the loggia all was silent. The blinds were still drawn up, and the sun beat in pitilessly. The plants were quite dead now; and they and the closed doors and windows gave the place a sad deserted appearance. Carlo looked down and sighed and resumed his task.

All at once he saw what made him start up and run to the balcony outside his window with outstretched hands and an answering cry; for a door opened and Junia came out, and flung herself down, with her arms extended, on the parapet, and her head hidden in her arms, sobbing and crying as if her heart would break. For a moment she lifted up her face—a face with awful despair written on it—and then hid it again and moaned and wept.

Carlo tried to say something—tried to say how much he felt for her in losing her father; but his voice was husky and choked. And then—the thought struck him—perhaps that despair was not because of her dead father, but because of her lover, who did not come! What could he say to such grief as that? He was not glad—it made him miserable to see her suffer so—and yet, after all, this lover for whom she was mourning was but a man who had loved many women before! Ah! now—now she was finding out what his real worth was. Carlo was not glad, but he was very near feeling glad, that she should find this out.

But so soon! he thought. After two days! as if it would have made matters better for the deception (if it was one) to have continued longer!

Suddenly his conscience pricked him. He shook himself free of his thoughts, exclaiming, "I am selfish, and vile, and wicked. I will go and confess to-morrow." His grandfather never prevented his going, as long as he went to a priest of his choosing. Signor Paolo would have forbidden the practice altogether; but on this head the Marchese had chosen to have his own opinion. "Yes," thought Carlo, "I am very wicked; much more so than I thought. I well deserve some severe penance." He leaned over the balcony and found voice to say, "Signorina! Dear Signorina Junia!"

Junia lifted up her face—she was crying more quietly now—and said, her voice breaking with sobs—

"O Carlo! dear Carlo! June is dying."

Carlo cried out, pale-faced and trembling, "What is it? The cholera?"

"Yes," Junia cried out again, and moaned in the midst of her sobs that if June died she should die too. They were born together, and she could not live without him.

Carlo implored—“O signorina! don’t say that. You must not die, you who are so beloved.” But she rose, and crying out good-bye, went in and shut the door.

Carlo forgot all about the list he was to learn. He went out on the stairs, thinking he would run down to the Berringtons’ door and try to get admitted. There was a stir down below, and he saw a black coffin carried out on the shoulders of hired men, and presently his grandfather, and the English doctor and Signor Paolo following, with black cloaks on. They got into two carriages. It was not long before the one in which sat the Marchese and Signor Paolo returned. They had accompanied the dead as far as the cemetery, but had not remained an instant longer. Even to have gone so far was a concession, perhaps a risk. But Mr Berrington had been worth much to their secret society while he lived, and his death was a loss in many ways; and though he could no longer befriend them, they could not refrain from paying one last mark of respect to his memory.

But where was the Englishman, Mr Kinnaird? This was a question Carlo kept on asking himself in the intervals of his grief for June, who was dying. He had hesitated about going to ask admittance at the Berringtons' door, after seeing that sad burden carried out. He could only sit at his window and mourn, and pray to all the saints and to the Madonna to ask God to make June well. Signor Paolo would have said, sternly, "Why so many mouthpieces? Take your wants to headquarters at once, like a man." But Carlo could not be made to see that side of the question.

The Marchese came to supper, and asked whether Carlo had yet committed the paper to memory. Carlo was obliged to confess that he was not perfectly sure of it yet. He said that his head felt confused, but was sorry for having given that excuse when he saw the Marchese's alarm.

"Art thou sure, quite sure?" the old man said, on Carlo's declaring that there was nothing the matter with him. "Remember that thou art the very apple of my eye—the only thing I have left. And thou must live and finish my work." Carlo could only reiterate that he was well, and obey the Marchese's order to go to bed and take a cordial, which would make him sleep soundly. How strange it was, to sleep while June was dying!

Early in the morning he rose, intending to ask permission of his grandfather to go to confession. The old man's door was shut, and Carlo waited, not venturing to wake him. While waiting, he heard voices on the stairs and a discordant howl, which made him run out and ask what was the matter. Signora Isabella was crying at her door; old Nunziata was still howling, and declaring they should be all dead soon.

"Yes, it is the pestilence, which takes both rich and poor, and old and young, just like flies at the end of summer. *Ohimè!*"

"Is he dead too?" Carlo would have

sprung down-stairs without waiting for a reply, but was stopped by Signora Isabella.

"He is not dead; he is better, Carlo." The signora laid a strong hand on him to detain him. "I promised the Signor Marchese — it was his charge to me — that I was not to let you enter the Berringtons' door whatever happened."

"Let me go!" Carlo cried, and would have broken from her had not the Marchese himself appeared. He took Carlo by the arm, and led him into the sitting-room.

"Sit down and let us reason together," he said. "Carlo, it is time to put away childish things. Listen to me."

"I cannot!" Carlo exclaimed. "I must see June, alive or dead. He is the only friend I have."

"Have I then failed to be thy friend, my Carlo?" said the Marchese, quietly.

"No, indeed, grandfather. It is not that. You are always good to me. But—it is not the same thing. It cannot be the same thing. Oh! if you were dead or dying, do you think anything would keep me from you, as you are now keeping me from June?"

"Listen! I live for two objects: you and Italy. Italy has just lost a friend in Mr Berrington. If you perish, in you Italy will lose a citizen. That may not be. Your death at present would be utterly useless to her. You owe it to me, who live for you, to keep out of danger. You owe it to your country, which you may live to serve openly and with honour, though I may not."

Carlo had it on his tongue to say he cared for nothing but June; but he dared not. He himself, with all he held dear,—his sympathies and his antipathies—his boyish love of art—his boyish love and friendship,—all seemed to sink into insignificance before the Marchese's solemn words. "For Italy" was a phrase often in the Marchese's mouth. Italy, to Carlo, had been hitherto merely a cold abstraction, a sort of hobby-horse on which his grandfather and Signor Paolo trotted out their democratic opinions in company. Now, Italy seemed to become all at once a concrete form, a living creature, selfish and far-sighted and pitiless, and not to be resisted. Was it not an awful thing that he might not go near a friend who lay at death's door just because Italy might want a man one day? That was how Carlo put it to himself. The Marchese thought from his silence that he had become more reasonable. But Carlo was feeling crushed, not convinced. He went to confession, and, to his surprise, got only a very light penance. Far graver sins had been poured into the Padre's ear that morning before Carlo's turn came! For fright had taken possession of the laughter-loving Florentines, and they crowded the confessionals, and quarrelled as to which should get first to the steps, so eager was every one to make his peace with Heaven without delay. When Carlo came back he stopped at the porter's wicket to ask news of June. He would not believe that he was better at his grandfather's word, nor Signora Isabella's. "They think I am afraid," he said to himself. "They think me a coward, and will not tell me the truth."

"But Signorino Marchesino!" said the porter, "does not your lordship know? The signorino is better — much better. It is no question of death with him, unless he gets worse——"

Carlo waited to hear no more. He bounded up-stairs. His grandfather and Signora Isabella were talking earnestly.

"What shall we do? The servants are leaving, panic-stricken. There is not an English family or an English nurse in Florence."

"But June is better," Carlo interrupted; "or did the porter say what was not true?"

"June is better. It is Junia who is so ill," said the Marchese.

Carlo fell in a heap on the floor. The Marchese lifted him up, saying, "See what a bag of nerves the poor creature is! 'Tis Junia who is so ill, my Carlo; not thy friend June."

"O Signor Marchese, why did you tell him?" Carlo heard the signora say, when he tried to rise and declare, boy-like, that there was nothing the matter with him.

Carlo remembered very little afterwards. He began to live in a painful dream, in which he was attended constantly by the Madonna and Junia, whose faces sometimes became unaccountably like Signora Isabella's or old Nunziata's. The dream lasted for a month or more. When he awoke, the Madonna had vanished; so had Junia. And he lay in his bed in the twilight with his head shaved, too weak to move. At the foot of his bed old Nunziata sat, telling her beads.

"Where is Junia?" he asked.

"What! the foreign signorina? Gone away, to be sure, with her mamma and all the rest. The house is shut up."

"When?" Carlo whispered.

"Yesterday."

Signora Isabella came in and sent the old woman away. It was a long time before Carlo could speak any more, even in a whisper; but at length he did contrive to whisper to the signora what he wished to know.

"Where are they gone?"

"The Berringtons? To London, my Carlo," said she, tenderly. Fifty times during his illness had her patient betrayed his secret. The signora felt the sincerest pity for him. But he was young—he was but a boy. Such sorrows were very small compared with the real sorrows of life, she thought.

"Did that Englishman go with them?"

The signora shook her head. "My husband went as far as Leghorn with them, and saw them on board the steamer. It was a sad journey."

"Then you are sure no Englishman went with them?"

"Quite sure."

Carlo closed his eyes with a sigh of relief, and slept.

It was not for a long time afterwards that he was able to learn anything more about the Berringtons. At last Signora Isabella got a letter from Junia. It was autumn, and she and her husband were enjoying the country air at the villa near Siena, whither the Marchese had taken Carlo as soon as he was well enough to be moved.

Signora Isabella told him the contents of the letter, and even gave it him to read, for his greater satisfaction. Mrs Berrington was living in Islington with June and Junia. Edward was at school. Anna was a governess. June was better and stronger, and had set up a studio, hoping to do something as an artist. The signora had shaken her head over this piece of news, but Carlo exulted over it. Glorious fellow! he would be sure to make his fortune in London, and then he would come back to Florence.

"As soon as I have money," he said, "I shall give June an order for the biggest picture that was ever painted."

"You might do worse," said Signora Isabella.

"Anna a governess!" said Carlo, again reading the letter. "Can you imagine such a thing? When I think of Anna, I picture to myself a beautiful little fairy in shining raiment, who is never tired, who is always saying clever things, and who lives on ices and lemonade."

Signora Isabella shook her head and sighed. "Poor Anna!"

"You were once a governess in England, were you not?"

"For a short time; when my husband was imprisoned in Rome. I taught Italian in a school, till — till they found some one who did it cheaper than I could do it."

"What did you do then, signora?"

"Oh—all sorts of things."

"Did you get rich?"

"How the boy talks! I just managed to keep body and soul together; very little more. Not always that," said the signora.

"Tell me what you did."

"It would take too long, and not be worth the telling. I was not happy, as you may suppose, with my husband in prison. I do not like even to think of that time."

Carlo changed the subject. "I should like to know where Islington is."

"It is a suburb of London."

"How strange that Junia should say nothing of herself! Her letter is filled up with news of everybody else. I wonder if she is happy?"

"Why not?" the signora said. "She is doing her duty. See, she says, 'Mamma is not strong, and I have to take a great deal of care of her.'"

"But people may do their duty and yet not be happy," Carlo persisted.

"If they do their duty perfectly they cannot help being happy," said the signora.

"Were you happy when you were working hard in England, and the signore was in a Roman prison?"

Signora Isabella laughed, a little disconcerted. "Of course there are exceptions. My case was certainly an exception, Carlo."

When he was one-and-twenty, Carlo thought, perhaps his grandfather would allow him to travel. Then he would go to Islington and see if Junia were still unmarried, and tell her how much he loved her. Often during that autumn and winter he asked Signora Isabella whether Junia had written again. But no letter ever came.

CHAPTER X.

There were some of Mr Berrington's relations living in London, who were not overpleased when the widow and her children came to take up their abode at Islington. These were, Mr Berrington's brother Mulgrave and his wife and daughter. They had a great house in Grosvenor Square, and a handsome place in the country which belonged to the wife, besides Ashdown, which belonged to the husband. His wife had been a noted heiress, and one of the stipulations with regard to the transfer of herself and her property had been that whosoever married her should assume her name. Had she been a very lovely woman, it is possible that this stipulation would have weighed but lightly in many a man's estimation; but she was so plain that even her money as a make-weight failed to attract men to her side. A squint added to her plainness so much that it is wonderful that she, even with her wealth, managed to get a husband at last. When he came, he came (you may be sure) in the shape of a needy man; and he happened to be a brother of Junius Berrington the elder, who lived and died at Florence. Mulgrave Berrington was a poor curate, with nothing but his father's allowance and a scanty salary: no expectations, and no fortune, unless his handsome face was one. His circumstances were peculiarly hard: he had been expensively brought up; his tastes were elegant if not extravagant, yet had he to look forward to a life of poverty, unless some piece of luck turned up such as never does turn up for young curates. His father was alive and hearty, and he had an elder brother, also alive and hearty. Junius, who was younger than himself, had been taken care of by a couple of old maiden aunts who had left him all their property; which Mulgrave felt to be an additional grievance. Therefore when he met Miss Odynell, and found that she was worth between fifty and sixty thousand pounds, it seemed to him that such a prize was worth running for; and he girded himself up and ran—and got it; herself, her name, her squint, her horses, and houses, and dogs—and her temper.

For her part, the lady was content. She got a handsome husband, some five or six years younger than herself, and a head-steward to her estates who would stand an amount of bullying no other head-steward would, and who cost much less. Miss Odynell probably had the best of the bargain; for, six months after he had married and changed his name for his wife's, Mulgrave's father and eldest brother were both dead, and he became master of the Ashdown estate and family house. His position was so far ameliorated that he had not to ask his wife for money; else, things remained the same. He was his wife's head-steward, and had to give an account of his stewardship. Mrs Odynell would have liked to make him give an account of his stewardship of the Ashdown property as well, but there Mulgrave ventured to draw the line.

When Mulgrave Odynell thought (he did think sometimes) of his poor relations at Islington, and pitied them for living in such a dull, pokey place, he had no idea how his poor relations pitied him, in his gilded mansion in Grosvenor Square; where he was, as June put it, head-slave to Queen Augusta, his wife. The house at Islington was certainly dull and pokey, if one sat down to think about it. But neither June nor Junia ever did sit down to think about it. It was not like Florence, of course. But what place in the world was like Florence? Would they have exchanged Casa Falconieri, with its balconies and frescoes, its gardens and fountains, for any house in Grosvenor Square? Both felt—as soon as they were strong enough to feel about anything—that the present was no time for retrospect or sentiment, but for the strongest, most downright commonsense.

If they sat down and cried themselves blind because of leaving Florence, would that give them the means of going back to live there? Things might have been ever so much worse. Their father might have died on his way home, instead of in the midst of those whom he loved best. Their mother and Edward might have been left penniless, instead of being reasonably well provided for. Then (Junia would think with a shudder) suppose June had died instead of recovering? When Junia sat day after day as model for a great picture her brother was painting—Antigone its name was to be—she would think of that dreadful day when it was believed that June would die. After such a day of terror as that, how could she be thankful enough to see him before her, looking like himself (only a little pale)! As she sat patiently, hour after hour, her hands would clasp each other instinctively, and her eyes fill with tears of mute thankfulness.

She thought of Leicester Kinnaird, sometimes — not often. Perhaps even the slight contact into which she had been brought with her Grosvenor Square relatives on one or two occasions, had helped her to understand what manner of man Kinnaird was. She was disappointed ; she said to herself that she should never love again, after being so mistaken in her estimate of this man. Had she been a different kind of girl she might have brooded over her disappointment, even though she acknowledged that Kinnaird was not worth being disappointed about. But to Junia, love was sacred, and kisses were very sacred things. And to this man it seemed clear they were playthings, used to wile away an idle hour. So that Junia could not help feeling that she had been imposed upon ; and that a good deal of tender thought and admiration and anxious beating of a heart unused to palpitate for trifles, had been thrown away. No girl likes to confess that her inexperience has been taken advantage of. Perhaps it was some such feeling that kept Junia from making a confidante of her mother or her sister.

But, even had it been otherwise, Junia would have taken blame to herself had she spent one moment in dreaming of, or regretting Leicester Kinnaird, when every moment of her life was wanted in her mother's service or in June's. She recognised the fact that there was other work for her than loving or being loved. Love was well enough for those who, like the lilies, neither toiled nor spun. For herself, she put it all aside, with the rest of the pleasant things that had belonged to her life in Florence. Such things would be again; the orange would blossom and the camellia show its face to the sun behind the line of cedars in the garden; but other eyes, not hers, would see them, other lips breathe in the tuberose-scented air. "To-day is mine, to-morrow thine," thought Junia.

Anna, who had given Mrs Odynell and her cousin Augusta—Gussie, she was called—no rest until they had helped her by their recommendation to a situation as governess,—Anna was surprised at what she was pleased to call Junia's apathy. "The idea of stopping at home when you might be earning money of your own!" she said. "I do not see what you do that makes your staying with mamma so necessary. As for June, he would get a better model than you for a shilling an hour. You ought to consider yourself, Junia."

But Junia was just one of those people who never can consider themselves. They are the people who make up the list of martyrs: solitary workers of the pioneer sort; old maids, often enough. If Junia at this time had any thoughts as to a special work or calling, it was with reference to her mother and June. To be her mother's comforter, and June's helper, was the work to which she believed herself specially called. There was no lingering, no looking back possible. There the work lay, spread out to eye and hand. It would be time to think of herself afterwards, she told Anna, with a smile.

"Yes, when you are old and worn out. A fine time that to begin the world on your own account!" said Anna, who was disappointed and a little irritated that her elder sister could not be made to look after her own interests. "If you have to work at all, the earlier you begin the better. Do you think I *like* governessing, after such a pleasant life as ours was? Dear papa certainly did make things pleasant for us. I never saw anybody half as happy as we were. Did you? No, my dear, I hate the sort of work, and I hate the low salary. Never mind, one must begin at the lowest step of the ladder, like any other apprentice. Thank goodness, I was properly educated. I can teach brats algebra if they have heads to learn it; and what I don't know of the 'ologies' I can pick up with books at odd times. And I suppose, if one has to work, one kind of work is as disagreeable as another."

So Anna explained her views, and gave good advice, and flitted away again. What sunshine visited the dull house at Islington that winter came in the shape of Junia's smile and pleasant words. For Mrs Berrington drooped and mourned, and June was working early and late, and getting despondent as his great picture advanced.

CHAPTER XI.

Mulgrave Odynell was no hero, nor did he make any pretence to heroism. He was well-born and well-bred, and looked a thorough gentleman; a fine, handsome specimen of the breed, such as cannot be seen every day. How else can he be described? Perhaps as good an idea of him as any will be gained by mentioning that, in his curate days, he was exactly the sort of man whom ladies liked to have to say grace at the bottom of a dinner-table. He was no hero. No hero could be the husband of a strong-minded, able-bodied woman like Mrs Odynell: a woman five feet eight in height, and broad in proportion. One might even go further, and say of Mulgrave Odynell that he was absolutely unheroic. But, unheroic as he undoubtedly was, he had a kind heart, and was subject to good-natured impulses, which were a bugbear to Mrs Odynell, and sufficiently inconvenient to himself.

Ever since the arrival in England of his brother's children and his widowed sister-in-law, these good-natured impulses had been strong within him. He longed to do something—some kind thing or useful thing—for poor Junius's boys. Mrs Berrington had been glad of his advice as to the choice of a school for Edward; and as the advice was attended with no expense—except, indeed, that he had taken Edward to the school and paid his railway fare—Mrs Odynell had made no objection. But still, as Mr Odynell thought—whenever the stewardship of Mrs Odynell's affairs gave him time for such thoughts—something more ought to be done. There was that fine interesting fellow June to be set out in the world. Something must certainly be done for him. But what? Mr Odynell thought a great deal about June, and about what ought to be done for him; much more than what Mrs Odynell would have approved of, had she known.

At this time of year it was Mrs Odynell's custom to have a succession of visitors at Odynell Park; and here she ought, following her rule, to have been entertaining in a princely manner. But an event was going to take place in the spring, which had caused the setting aside of this rule for once. Her only daughter and heiress, Augusta, was about to be married to Lord Crewkerne; and the ordering of the *trousseau*—a weighty matter when such an heiress was concerned—had brought Mrs Odynell up to Grosvenor Square. Mr Odynell had pleaded to be let off, but his wife had chosen that he should come, and he came. Once in London, however, one of the first things he did was to go and see his poor relations at Islington. He went in a mean way—that is, he said at breakfast that he would go to Hancock's and see about a bracelet which was being made for Gussie. And then, having left Hancock's, he sent the carriage home, and walked down Piccadilly till he met a cab, and so off to Islington.

His first thought was, How can they exist in such a place? He had thought Grosvenor Square dull and dingy looking, and altogether detestable, after the brightness and the fresh air of Odynell Park. But what words would describe the dulness and dinginess of Islington? He began to take himself to task for having let them remain there so long. Was there not Ashdown, where Augusta never would live? It would be a positive advantage to the house to have some one living in it. Carried away for once by his good-nature, it was not till he had actually given the invitation to his sister-in-law that his mind misgave him that he had better have consulted his wife first.

Mrs Berrington did not jump at the offer; and herein he was disappointed, as well as surprised. For he felt that in making it he had done a thing which would not be done every day. But Mrs Berrington had expected him to say some word about his wife: some word that should make it clear that the invitation was hers rather than his. And he had forgotten all about her till afterwards.

"Islington is dull, no doubt," said Mrs Berrington, "but I do not think it duller than all other places would be to me; and it is convenient in many ways. As for June and Junia, they are too busy to be dull."

"But the air, Anne; what of that?" said Mr Odynell, who could not for shame draw back now. "At Ashdown you would get such fresh air as you could not get here for love or money. I am sure I feel positively choked in Grosvenor Square. And there is a tolerable kitchen-garden—not much in it, of course, just now; but I would see to that if you would go down there to live. And there is the old pony-carriage my mother used to drive about in. I must get Augusta to persuade you if you won't listen to me."

All this was very well said, and, so far as it showed that his heart was in its right place, was gratifying to his relatives. But as for his getting Augusta to do anything! The bare idea made everybody in the room smile inwardly (except himself). Mrs Berrington said a few words, to show that she was grateful for his kind intentions, but signified at the same time that, for many reasons, she thought Islington the best place.

"Come and see our studio, uncle," said Junia. "June has such a capital north light, and he is getting on so well with his picture." Mr Odynell allowed himself to be taken captive by his beautiful niece, and was led upstairs to the top of the house, and into a small bare room which smelt horribly of turpentine, and had nothing in it except an easel with a large canvas on it, a chair or two, and the necessary lay figure. June was modest, and stood back a little as they entered, for he thought, poor fellow, of the Domenichinos, and Correggios, and Guidos, in the National Gallery, and imagined his uncle would have these in his mind as he looked on the half-finished picture. But Junia had no such hesitation.

"There!" she said, placing a chair for her uncle in the best position. "Now uncle, tell me what you think."

Mr Odynell looked at her and smiled.

"What I think!" he said. "Why, that you are the loveliest of nieces."

"Thank you, uncle, that is very pretty," said Junia, with a blush and a curtsey. "But never mind me. It is a good likeness of course. But tell me what you think of the picture as a picture. Now, please don't speak in a hurry. Give yourself time. Be critical."

"Oh!" Mr Odynell groaned, with a comical twinkle in his eyes. "Have you a horse now, or a dog, or a sheep, or even a pig? I'll tell you if they are drawn right, fast enough."

"I am very sorry," was June's answer. "We don't go in for animals here. In fact, we have not accommodation for them."

"Lots of animals at Ashdown. Lots of accommodation too," said Mr Odynell.

"Uncle," said Junia, "why will you not look at the picture? I shall feel hurt if you don't. I am the model, and models have their feelings, I can tell you."

Thus adjured, Mr Odynell did as he was bidden. He gave his mind to the picture, and was critical.

" Hum—ha! I suppose you think he is going to set the Thames on fire, eh?" he said at last.

"I don't suppose,—I know it," said Junia, with a bright, confident glance at June.

"Well, my dear, it is all very nice, I daresay—very nice—very pretty (I don't think it does you justice, Junia—still, it is very nice). But now," he said, turning to June, "the question is, my dear boy, what is the upshot of it all? What is the end you have in view? Tell me that."

"My end?" said June, with a face that shone bright with the hopes of youth; "my end is, honestly to get my own living by painting as good pictures as I can."

"Painting—painting is a fiddlestick!" said uncle Mulgrave, with more force than elegance. "I wish you would be serious, June, for it is a serious matter. You know how you will be left when your mother dies. I need not go into all that. You must know it as well as I do."

Junia turned pale; her hand sought June's, and June's hers, by instinct. But it was June who spoke. "Surely you do not think her worse. We knew she was not strong—she has never recovered her strength since our father's death. But—surely——"

"No, indeed, I meant nothing—nothing to alarm you, that is," said Mr Odynell, filled with compunction that his words should have driven the blood from those beautiful twin-faces. "But these contingencies must be looked at boldly and provided for. Your mother appears stronger than when I first saw her. But you know, my dear boy, and my dear niece, that, live as long she may, she must die one day. And then—what will become of you and Anna? Your mother only has a life-interest in Leasowes."

"I shall have made my way as a painter by that time—God willing," said June.

"And I—I shall paint, and take care of June," said Junia.

"My dear fellow! my dear children! you won't get bread to eat," said Mr Odynell, aghast.

"We cannot tell till we try," said both together, undaunted.

"Pictures," said Mr Odynell with emphasis, "are a drug in the market. You may paint for ten, fifteen, twenty years, and not make a name for yourself. And 'tis the name that sells the thing. Now, June, I make you an offer. You shall go to Cambridge, stay there till you take your degree, and then—take orders. And I," he continued, striking his stick on the floor, "I will supply all the necessary funds. Wait!"—for June would have spoken—"you shall read with a private tutor for six months first, if you like. Stop a bit!"—for again June would have spoken—"when you are a curate (I know what a curate's pay is) I'll make you a proper allowance. There, my boy, shake hands, and let us call it a bargain."

"Oh!" Junia exclaimed, full of apprehension. Was it possible that June would do this thing? But June soon reassured her.

"Do not think me ungrateful," he said, wringing his uncle's hand. "Indeed, indeed, I am not that. But I cannot do it. If I know what a vocation means, Art is mine. For the Church, I have none. I could not take upon me to enter such a service without feeling a special call. To do so would be a sacrilegious act, to my mind. I couldn't do it!"

But Mr Odynell was not at the end of his argument. "A vocation is all very well when your bread and cheese are provided for you; but Art will not give you even dry bread."

June smiled incredulously, and said he and Junia intended to try.

But Mr Odynell would not take his refusal. "Talk it over with your mother," he said, "and give me your answer a month — six months hence. I don't want to hurry you. Your mother is a sensible woman. You cannot do better than talk it over with her."

When Mr Odynell re-entered the parlour, Mrs Berrington's first words were, "What do you think of June's picture?"

"A capital likeness of Junia, only it makes her look older. But I don't pretend to understand high art. I suppose it's high art: Antigone, and that sort of thing, eh? What made the boy think of Antigone, I wonder?" said Mr Odynell, pulling his whisker.

Mrs Berrington smiled, but a sigh followed the smile. "It was Junia's thought, I believe. Antigone is one of her pet heroines. Their dear father taught them Greek when they were quite little."

"What! Junia?" said Mr Odynell. "Junia too?"

"Yes. Why not? They began the alphabet at four years old."

"At four years old!" said Mr Oydnell. "'Tis a wonder they did not die of water on the brain."

Mrs Berrington gave a slight smile of pity at her brother-in-law's ignorance. "I think both Junius and I knew what we were about. Greek never gave them a headache, I know. It came naturally—as naturally as a lesson in history or English grammar. Junia was reading her Greek Testament by the time she was nine years old. And—the delight it was both to them and their father! He used to read them passages from the poets, too, and help them to translate. They cannot bear the sight of their Greek books now——" Here Mrs Berrington broke off, for she could speak no more.

Mr Odynell, too, was silent for a moment. Here was a glimpse into his poor brother's home life which he had not expected. What could he know of such delights? Even supposing it had ever entered into his head to teach his Gussie her Greek alphabet at the tender age of four—which it had not—would his Augusta have let her learn? "I wish to speak to you, Anne," he said, after a pause; and he spoke very gently, and drew his chair a little nearer his sister-in-law. "I wish to speak to you about June. I may not understand high art,—indeed I don't pretend to; but I understand when a young fellow looks as if he didn't take proper exercise."

"He does sit very close at his work," said Mrs Berrington.

"And in such an atmosphere! I smell the turpentine yet."

"He is afraid to open the window. The blacks get in and spoil the wet colours."

"Ay, ay. Then again, besides exercise, he ought to feed properly."

"What do you mean? He eats enough."

"I mean that he ought to have proper food and proper drink."

"Mulgrave, what do you mean?" said Mrs Berrington, with a heightened colour.

"Now don't be offended, my dear Anne. You know you lived all your married life in Italy, where I understand the people live on small birds, and the insides of fowls, and such things. Pray don't be offended. I mean no offence, I assure you. I only want to tell you that the English climate requires a substantial diet. When I was June's age I ate underdone beef three times a-day, and washed it down with a quart of good home-brewed."

"Then, uncle, I wonder you didn't die of apoplexy long ago," said Junia, who had entered while he was speaking.

"Die of apoplexy! I was all the better for it, miss; and I should like to put you on the same diet. Why, God bless my soul! you are all as white as ghosts. I am sure, my dear Anne, you don't make them drink enough wine. There is nothing like a good glass of wine. 'Wine maketh glad the heart of man,' you know, my dear."

"I daresay it does," said Junia; "but I don't know, for I never tried it."

"Never tried it! Why, Gussie wouldn't know how to get over the middle of the day without her glass of sherry." After a few more words on the importance of the midday glass, uncle Odynell took his leave.

Next day half-a-dozen bottles of sherry came to Mrs Berrington. Junia opened a bottle and tasted it. "That will not make my heart glad, mamma," she said.

Mrs Berrington tasted in her turn. "My dear, your uncle means well, poor man; but I think he must have made a mistake." That was her verdict on the wine.

But June was wrathful, and made faces at it. "I believe Mrs Odynell wants to poison you," he declared. "No man would dare send a lady such horrible stuff as this. It is she who has sent it."

June was right. The sherry was sent by Mrs Odynell, from a small store which she kept by her for charitable purposes. It was some which she had seen advertised in a clerical newspaper, and specially recommended to the clergy for the use of the sick poor.

"Poor uncle Mulgrave!" was all Mrs Berrington said. And the wine was put aside.

Anna, who sometimes spent a Sunday with her family, was of quite a different opinion about accepting the invitation to Ashdown. "Refuse it! Refuse such an offer as that! Dearest mamma, what were you thinking of? And you are looking so pale, so in want of fresh air!" Anna could have stamped her little foot with impatience. "You should have jumped at such an offer. Junia, how could you let mamma refuse? I wish you would see things as I see them. Here is this man, as rich as he can be, our father's only brother, the only near relative we have in the world. It is a shame that he did not invite you to live there when we first came to England. It is a shame that his wife and his daughter—our only cousin—have never yet done us a civility or a kindness. Should we have behaved so to them?"

"Heaven forbid!" said Mrs Berrington.

"Well, my opinion is, that since they won't give us the kindness and the help which it is their plain duty to give, we ought to try and get as much out of them as we can. There!"

"Anna, I fear that you have no proper pride," said Mrs Berrington.

"Yes, mamma, I have plenty. But I have put it in my pocket, and I intend to keep it there till I can afford to wear it."

Next day a note came to Mrs Berrington, who smiled as she read it, and handed it to Junia, who read it in her turn.

"I wonder what Anna would say now?" she remarked.

The note was from Mrs Odynell. It began, "My dear Mrs Berrington;" and ended, "Yours sincerely." It ran as follows:—

"Mr Odynell tells me that you have not been well lately. We shall be glad if you will go down and stay at Ashdown for a fortnight's change of air. I am sorry we cannot offer you a longer stay; but Mr Odynell expects a party of friends down there for the shooting in a fortnight or three weeks' time; and after that we shall probably be having workmen in the house, as my daughter Augusta and Lord Crewkerne think of spending some time there after their marriage—till the alterations in their house are completed, that is."

"It is just as well you did refuse, mamma," said Junia. "I suppose you don't think it worth while to go just for the fortnight she offers you."

"No," said Mrs Berrington. "I should scarcely have recovered from the fatigue of the journey before I should be obliged to move again. And I want to be quiet—quiet."

"Till I die," she said to herself. But she did not wish to die. She wished to live till she was very, very old, for her children's sake. June told her of the offer his uncle had made him, and his refusal of it. He did not talk it over with her, as Mr Odynell had desired. "Of course I refused," he said. "No amount of talking could make me feel fit for entering the Church. It is unlucky that uncle Odynell has never yet wanted to do us a kindness which we could accept. I am very sorry, but it cannot be helped this time."

"No," said his mother, "it cannot be helped. I could not bear for you to take holy orders as a mere expediency. Some people think so lightly about these things. But you—I had rather see you a poor man all your days, my dear boy, than see you enter the priest's office without a real vocation for it."

"Well, you will write to uncle, and thank him, and say it will not do, won't you?" said June. "I hope he won't feel hurt."

"I hope not," said Mrs Berrington.

She spent a great deal of time over her letter, and said a great deal about June's gratitude for his uncle's kind intentions. They read the letter together before she sent it off, and June declared nothing could be nicer. "You always know how to say exactly the right thing, mother darling," he said, kissing her.

As the winter passed, and nothing was either seen or heard of uncle Odynell, they began to fear that he was offended.

"But I can't help it, can I, Junia?" June would say. "I cannot do a wrong thing to please him."

And Junia would answer, "Of course not, June! Never mind. Only go on about the picture. He will change his mind when he sees that picture finished. Ah, you'll see."

CHAPTER XII.

It was Sunday morning in the month of May. Mrs Odynell sat at her breakfast-table in her gorgeous breakfast-room in Grosvenor Square (hers in every sense of the word, as she reminded Mr Odynell sometimes — everything that house contained had been paid for with her money). She was alone, and sat looking over a heap of letters which had come the night before while she was at the opera. Some church-bells were ringing already, but they were common, parish church-bells, and did not disturb Mrs Odynell, whose place of worship kept fashionable hours, like its congregation.

One of her letters appeared to cause her some dissatisfaction. She laid it down with a frown, as Mr Odynell shuffled in in his slippers.

"Mulgrave, look here. I've got such an absurd letter from Mrs Junius."

"A letter from Anne? Oh, indeed, indeed! Shall I give you some of this tongue, Augusta?" said Mr Odynell, as he took his seat and prepared to wield the carving-knife.

"None, thank you. Will you read this presently?" And she passed it down to him, with his cup of tea.

Mr Odynell read it, laid it down, pulled his whiskers, took the letter up, and read it again. He could not see the absurdity of it. Anne wrote a fair hand, and expressed herself well, he thought. Anne—poor thing—was in low spirits about herself. No wonder, in such a place as Islington, and in such horrid muggy weather as we have had—damp enough to stifle one! thought Mr Odynell. But where was the absurdity? Where the dickens was the absurdity of the letter? He waited to take his cue from his wife.

"Well, what do you think of it?" said she at last, craning her neck round—the silver tea-urn hiding each from the other as they sat.

"I really don't know," said Mr Odynell. "How should I know? I suppose she must be feeling worse, as she says she is worse."

Then Mrs Odynell gave her opinion. "I don't believe she is worse. They declared she was going to die twice last year; and she got better instead. Gussie"—this is Miss Odynell, who entered the room—"you are dreadfully late. Read this letter from Mrs Junius while I pour out your tea."

Gussie, glancing over the letter, declared that it was too absurd.

"The idea of her wanting you to go to Islington, mamma! Why does she write to you? She has always written to papa."

Mr Odynell winced a little. He knew that he had never answered the letter which Mrs Berrington wrote, telling him that June felt it impossible to enter the Church. Perhaps he ought to have written to show that he still felt friendly, though he was annoyed at June's refusal.

Gussie went on: "If she has anything so very particular to say, why can't she write it at once? She must know how engaged you are."

"Could you manage to get there this afternoon?" Mr Odynell ventured to say.

"Mulgrave! you forget that it is Sunday."

"Well, you know my dear, it is not as if Anne were a mere acquaintance. She is poor Junius's widow. And—I'm sure she must be ill, to write as she does."

"Her being your sister-in-law does not alter the fact of its being Sunday, does it?"

"Of course not," said Mr Odynell, meekly. It was a boast of his wife, that during her married life she had never had her horses out for any purpose on Sundays, except to drive to church.

"Could you go to-morrow, Augusta, do you think?" said Mr Odynell, with feeble pertinacity.

"Mamma could not possibly go to-morrow," Gussie interposed. "To-morrow there is a meeting of the Society for supplying aluminium thimbles to the London needle-women at half-price. Lady Crewkerne presides; and she begged mamma last night not to miss it. Besides—the fact is, that if aunt Junius expected us to go and see her, she should not have gone to Islington. How is mamma to get there? Mamma, I feel perfectly certain—if it wasn't Sunday I'd bet you ten pair of gloves—that if you were to say, 'Church Row, Islington,' to Henderson, Henderson would give you warning as soon as you came back. Respectable servants don't like to be seen in such vulgar places. Islington! Why, Islington is, as one may say, next door to Pentonville!"

"My dear," said Mr Odynell, mildly, pulling his whisker, "it is Henderson's duty to go where his mistress chooses."

"Not to Islington, papa. Let mamma try it, that's all. She will find out that I am right."

"I'm sure I don't want to try!" said Mrs Odynell. "If Henderson were to go, I should never find anybody to match James; and I don't want James to go,—so many people would be glad to get him."

Before they separated to dress for church, Mrs Odynell had decided what to do. A half-dozen of sherry—same vintage as the last—should be sent to Mrs Berrington. Inside the basket (to save postage) a note should be placed, advising Mrs Berrington to consult the eminent physician, Dr Quintus Curtius; and begging that Mrs Odynell might be allowed to know the result of the consultation.

"And then," Mrs Odynell said to her daughter, "we shall know exactly what to think. For Mrs Junius is one of those people who are always on the see-saw; and that is so unsatisfactory."

Mr Odynell found it difficult to fix his mind on the service that morning as it behoved him to do. He was thinking of his sister-in-law, and wishing that she had not put herself into a place which was so difficult to reach. He felt sure she would have been better down at his place in the country. Augusta had declared the house would be wanted; and it had turned out that it would not be wanted at all; for Gussie and Lord Crewkerne had been down to look at it, and they had considered the rooms too small and low. He had half a mind to ask Anne again to go down and stay there. Something he would do, if it were but to ease his conscience of the sin of neglect, and to show Anne that he felt friendly, even though he had been annoyed at June's refusal of his offer. He thought and thought about his sister-in-law till he had made himself quite unhappy. There was poor Junius, so blest in his wife and children. And what had been the end of it all! The loss of money was a thing bad enough in itself, and hard enough to bear: but for his brother to feel that he was leaving a tender, delicate woman like Anne, and such daughters as Junia and Anna, to poverty, must surely have added bitterness to his brother's last moments, if he could think or feel at all. Then he remembered having heard that in fatal cases of cholera insensibility preceded death. Was it so with poor Junius? Had he been spared some mental pangs? Mr

Odynell had no experience to guide him to help in answering this conjecture. He had been required to keep himself aloof from all contact with that and every other infectious disease, ever since he had been Mrs Odynell's husband. He began to speculate whether, in the world to which he was gone, his brother would know or care how that sweet woman and her girls and boys were faring. But on this point, too, his experience was *nil.* The outcome of all these conjectures was, that he felt it press strongly on him that his plain duty was to help Anne and her children more than he had hitherto done. He was well aware that such excuses as he could make for not having helped them hitherto would not pass with Him in whose house he was sitting. He would not dare say to Him, "I let them alone and did nothing, for I feared my wife's tongue, and I am a man of peace." No! he would seek Anne out, and force his kindness upon her whether she would or not. June, to be sure, had refused his offer of being sent to Cambridge; and he had a perfect right to be annoyed. Nevertheless, he would again make the offer. He would himself go to Islington and talk the matter over with Anne, and try to get her to see it in a proper light. What a sweet voice Anne had! And what a deep mellow note Junia had! It was a pleasure to hear them speak. And it was not always a pleasure to hear his Augusta and his Gussie speak. Mrs Odynell was loud-voiced, and made grimaces; and Gussie took after her mother. At their largest dinner-parties Mrs Odynell and Gussie could always make themselves heard above all the clatter and din. He, poor man, sitting at the bottom of his wife's dinner-table, would wince and shrink as the strident, brassy tones reached his neighbourhood. From meditating on the qualities of these women's voices, he was brought back suddenly to the business of the time and place. A popular preacher filled the pulpit, and was in the midst of an eloquent, elegantly-delivered discourse in aid of the funds of the Society for the Suppression of Wife-beating in the Pangwang Islands.

"Owing to the exertions of the Society's agents," said the eloquent preacher, "the number of beaten wives since the last report from Pangwang was three hundred and five, showing a marked decrease within the last two years, when the number of the beaten reached to three hundred and thirty-five."

The preacher went on to say that the diminution must be regarded as a great encouragement to the subscribers. Mr Odynell, who, while thinking of his brother's widow and children, had taken up an attitude of dogged attention, now changed to a more comfortable one.. He had known beforehand that there was to be a collection, for Gussie had told him. But, when he listened and heard all about the three hundred and five, and the three hundred and thirty-five, he decided that, in all probability every one of them deserved the beating she got. "Daresay the husbands did it in self-defence," he thought; and resolved to keep the guinea in his pocket for a more worthy purpose. "By Jove! I know of some wives who would be a deuced sight better for a little discipline now and then," he thought. Gussie, looking up, thought she had never seen her father look so sulky and cross.

Mrs Odynell had her own private anxiety, which, though totally different in its nature from that under which her husband was labouring, was not the less calculated to keep her from devoting the proper attention to the report of the Society's operations. In vain she endeavoured to look over into Pangwang and see how many wives were being beaten there : her efforts to enlarge her mental horizon would take her no farther than the bedside of her suffering Nanine. For just as she was in the act of taking up the prayer-book (she always composed herself for five minutes between the last touch to the bonnet-strings and the announcement of the carriage) her maid had entered the dressing-room with the alarming intelligence that Nanine looked as if she were going to have a fit. Mrs Odynell had just time to measure the required dose of ether when the carriage was announced. When the service was over and she was rolling homewards, she trembled to think how she would find Nanine. Would the dose of ether (administered with some difficulty) have sufficed to ward off the fit? It was an anxious moment for Mrs Odynell when she saw her maid Hales on the stairs leading to her room.

"How is she, Hales? Now don't tell me she is worse, for I couldn't bear it."

Nanine's state of health made it necessary that she should have a watchful attendant; therefore Mrs Hales had been deprived of her Sunday-morning service. Nevertheless she answered cheerfully: "Oh no, 'm, she ain't worse; you may be quite easy, 'm; I think the fit has passed off. I came out here to tell you, for I knew you would be anxious."

"Indeed, Hales, I have been anxious. I couldn't help thinking of the dear pet in church. You shall go to church this afternoon, Hales, and I'll stay at home and take care of her."

"Thank you, 'm, I'm sure; but if you think you'll want me?"

"Oh no, Hales. I should never forgive myself if I kept you from church all Sunday.

Now, Hales, what had Nanine better have for dinner? A little soup?"

"If it's clear, 'm. But not julienne, or anything of that kind."

"My own sweet!" Mrs Odynell exclaimed, as she entered the boudoir and approached a basket, lined and trimmed with scarlet cloth, where lay the suffering Nanine.

"Yap, yap!" A white greyhound jumped from the basket into Mrs Odynell's lap. The meeting between the two was touching. Let a veil be cast over it. For one half-hour Nanine and her mistress were both happy.

The same cannot be said of Mr Odynell. He sat ill at ease, in his big arm-chair in the library. He had begun (although it was Sunday) to indite a letter to Anne. When the luncheon-bell rang he was reading it over, and asking himself whether it was kind enough and considerate enough. He read one or two bits of it out loud, and thought to himself that they sounded very well indeed. Yet, while he ate his luncheon, it struck him that the kindest, most considerate thing of all, would be to go himself. But then again, such an expedition was more easily planned than accomplished. He was by no means an idle man; he had his engagements, just as many, and far more important, than Mrs Odynell's. Monday, he had an appointment with a friend to meet a brown missionary at breakfast, prior to an Exeter Hall gathering. Tuesday there was a great pig and poultry show. He could not miss that pig and poultry show. He was a fancier of both, and an exhibitor of both kinds. After his own fashion, he loved his Chinese pigs and his feather-legged bantams and his Buenos Ayres ducks; the hours he spent in their society were hours of unalloyed happiness. They never set him to rights, or put him down, or contradicted him, as Mrs Odynell and Gussie did. Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, were all fully disposed of. Not one of those days contained an engagement that could be missed or postponed, or in any way got rid of. But on Saturday he would be a free man, tied by no engagement. On Saturday he swore solemnly to himself that, come what might, to Islington he would go, and see with his own eyes how his brother's widow was faring.

Luncheon was nearly over before a word was spoken. Then Mrs Odynell observed—

"I have been so anxious about Nanine."

Mr Odynell had an aversion to lap-dogs—especially to Nanine. He said, coolly, "What's the matter with her?"

"I was afraid of a nervous attack."

"You shouldn't give her so much to eat—that's all."

"She never eats too much, Mulgrave; she lives quite by rule, poor darling!"

Mr Odynell did not venture to contradict the statement. Presently Mrs Odynell began again—

"I almost wish I had not brought her with me. I fear London is too exciting for her."

"I daresay it is."

"Hales was so good; she stayed at home from church this morning to take care of Nanine, without grumbling in the least. I don't like her missing two services, so I shall stay at home with the poor pet myself this afternoon."

"It would be as well not to leave her," said Mr Odynell, who desired nothing better than that his wife should stay up in her dressing-room all the afternoon with Nanine. Then he would let Gussie go to church by herself, and he would set off at once to Islington.

He shut himself up in the library with this intent. As the carriage drove up to the door he rang the bell, and desired that Miss Odynell might be told not to wait for him. Everything passed as he could have wished. The message was given, the carriage drove off, the door slammed, and the hall was quiet. Mr Odynell stole forth, seized his hat and gloves from the table, when—a female step was heard on the stairs, a bonnet peeped over the balustrade, and the voice of Mrs Hales said, respectfully, "Oh, if you please, sir, would you step up and help the mistress to hold Nanine? The fit is come on dreadful!"

"Confound Nanine!" Mr Odynell ejaculated, as he laid his hat and gloves down again. From sheer habit he obeyed his wife's will. It only occurred to him afterwards how easily he might have told Hales to say he was on the point of going out. Then by the time remonstrance arrived he would have been out of the reach of it. He had done his best, however, and he conceded that much to himself. He had done his best, and he would go on trying to do his best. Perhaps some higher Fate than he knew of ordained that he was to spend that Sunday afternoon in his wife's dressing-room, holding Nanine. "By Jove! to have stayed at home from church for this!" he thought, longing to throttle the beast. But he did what he could. He sent his letter; he took out the half-dozen sherry from a special bin with his own hands, and saw to its being properly packed. And he added a postscript to his letter just before it went, telling his sister-in-law to expect him on Saturday. The note that Mrs Odynell was to have sent inside the basket never got written at all. Nanine's sufferings quite put it out of her head.

CHAPTER XIII.

On Saturday morning, Mrs Odynell, who had been up unusually late the night before, was breakfasting in bed as a preparation for the day's business and pleasure. A small and select party of two hundred were to assemble in her rooms at three o'clock to hear Sivori, that prince of fiddlers. On a sofa within sight of the bed lay the dress Mrs Odynell was going to wear. What trouble had that dress cost her! She had had a journey to Paris on purpose to match the lace trimming; for the London lace merchants had declared that pattern to be quite extinct. But the trouble and money were not thrown away. The lace was beyond price, and it was hers, and would be her daughter's one day. So the dress was cheap, after all.

She was startled from her luxurious repose by her husband. He entered, red, flurried, unlike himself. He burst in without ceremony; he slammed the door.

"For pity's sake!" said Mrs Odynell, with her hands to her ears. "My nerves, Mulgrave! Do be more gentle."

"I'm very sorry, my dear; I quite forgot——"

("Just like you," Mrs Odynell murmured.)

"But oh, Augusta! it does seem—I don't wish to blame anybody but myself—but it does seem,—the fact is—she is no more. She's dead, Augusta. Poor, poor thing!"

"Nanine! She was here five minutes ago!" screamed Mrs Odynell, pulling at the bell-rope. "Nanine! Nanine!"

"Confound Nanine!" said Mr Odynell, drawing himself up and speaking with unaccustomed dignity. "Do leave off shrieking. It's not Nanine. I wish it was." This last *sotto voce.*

"Then what is it? And why do you come

to my room in such a wild way, when you know how nervous I am ?"

Mr Odynell recovered himself and spoke quietly : "Anne Berrington is dead. She died yesterday. Augusta, I think you will always be sorry that you did not go to see her when she asked you. I know that, for my own part, I shall be sorry as long as I live that I did not make an effort and go in your stead. Poor Anne! poor dear Anne!"

There was a pause. Mr Odynell walked up and down with his face hidden in his handkerchief; Mrs Odynell lay with her eyes fixed on the dress she was going to wear.

"I suppose you will be going to Islington?" she said.

"Of course I must go. I must see those poor children."

"Nobody could have expected this, Mulgrave. I am sure you need not blame yourself, nor me either."

"I don't wish to blame you, my dear—only——" But Mr Odynell left unsaid what he was going to say. What was the good of saying anything now? Anne was dead. He who had had it in his mind to do so much, could do nothing. She had escaped beyond his neglect—beyond his kindness. He was terribly shocked to think of it. Had she only lived one day more! one single day! He opened the door, gently enough this time; half closed it behind him; then, putting his head in, suggested—

"You don't think you could manage to get there yourself, to-day, do you, Augusta?"

Mrs Odynell sat upright in her bed. "How is such a thing possible?" she said. "Don't you know that I have two hundred people coming at three o'clock to hear Sivori?"

"I forgot that. You could not put them off, could you?"

"Impossible," said Mrs Odynell.

"Well, good-bye. You won't see me till dinner-time," he said, closing the door.

Mrs Odynell considered a moment, and then rang for Hales. She wrote a note and desired Hales to take it herself to Madame Louise and bring back patterns.

"You'll make them understand the sort of thing required. As slight as possible, so as not to interfere with Miss Odynell's wedding, Hales. Pale lavender, I should say myself. But they will know the right thing. For a husband's sister-in-law, remember."

. . . . . .

"I had no idea—none whatever—of there being anything serious the matter," Mr Odynell was saying to his niece Junia. "But I should have come to see for myself. I shall never forgive myself for not doing so." He was speechless awhile from distress; and Junia, in the midst of her own deeper grief, tried to comfort him.

"She is happier now, uncle. She is gone to papa, and she is better off so."

"Yes. Now they are both with God," said June.

"Both with God," they said, and could take comfort in the knowledge. But their uncle had no comfort to give them, and much less knew how to take any himself. If she had but lived one day! just that he might tell her he would be kind to her children! So, he would have had some mitigation of his sorrow. Whereas now he had none.

In her boudoir, during the half-hour preceding the arrival of the guests, Mrs Odynell and her daughter met to admire each other's dresses and have a private consultation.

"I have a presentiment," said Gussie, "that papa will want to have Junia Berrington to stay here after the funeral. And I don't think that would do at all, mamma. It would be unpleasant having a person in deep mourning in the house, just as the wedding was coming off. And then, too, Junia is the sort of girl men always admire; and I should be excessively put out if Crewkerne were to attempt any flirtation with her."

"My dear Gussie," said Mrs Odynell, "I have never failed in my duty to you yet, and I am not going to begin. But of course I must find out what your papa is going to do before I can act."

Mrs Odynell kept her word. "What about June and those two girls?" she asked, as soon as she saw her husband alone after his return from Islington. "Have you settled anything?"

Mr Odynell took to himself the wisdom of the serpent. "I do not see how anything can be done till after the funeral," he said. In his own mind everything was settled already.

But he was very prudent; so prudent that he did not tell even his nieces and nephew how he intended to manage for them, till after he had seen his brother's widow laid in her last resting-place. Then he told them his plan. June would go to Cambridge; Junia—and Anna if she so pleased—would come home to Grosvenor Square. "And you will regain your nice colour, and rest and be comfortable, my dear," he said, with his hand on Junia's shoulder.

"You are most kind," Junia murmured. Then she waited to see what June would say.

June said, "I can't part with Junia, uncle. Junia is a great help to me."

Mr Odynell put up his hand. "Not a word more, if it is to speak of that painting business.

I am your guardian now, June, and you are bound to listen to me. I will not say how I regret that so much precious time should have been lost over paints and canvasses; I will not say a word about it. Put up your things and come home to Grosvenor Square. In a few days we will talk about Cambridge."

Mr Odynell went home and told his wife bluntly what he had arranged. He did not even say that he supposed she would not mind its being so.

But Mrs Odynell made no objection. "I suppose they must come," she said. "It will be inconvenient, but we must manage."

"Of course we must manage," said Mr Odynell. "They are my own brother's children. Where else should they go?"

Mrs Odynell did not answer. She believed that she had her work cut out for her; and indeed it was a very bad quarter of an hour for her when she saw her daughter, after the latter had learnt that her beautiful cousin Junia was coming to Grosvenor Square. Mrs Odynell felt that she had done what was possible. She had arranged in her own mind how to prevent Junia ever being in her daughter's way; and what more could Gussie expect? But Gussie refused to be satisfied. "I know as well as possible that Crewkerne will want to be flirting with her," she said.

CHAPTER XIV.

In their poor home at Islington the brother and sister took counsel together, not less anxiously than Mrs Odynell and Gussie in Grosvenor Square.

Anna had quickly decided for herself. "As to living with Mrs Odynell," she said, "the thing is out of the question. I should be a sort of unpaid companion, and have more kicks than halfpence. I'll turn Cinderella first." But she made known her decision to her uncle in much prettier language. "Might she," she asked, "consider her dear uncle's house a home to come to if she were ill, or in want of a situation, or in need of rest?" "Indeed she might," uncle Mulgrave said, with a kiss. Anna went her way, quite content. As long as she could make her kindred useful when she wanted them she was pleased, and neither grumbled at her own work nor envied them their riches.

June decided that, for one month only, they would go to Grosvenor Square.

"You are looking pale, as uncle said. You ought to have a change. And we must at any rate leave this house."

"But you will not give up painting?" cried Junia. "You will not let uncle Mulgrave tempt you to go to Cambridge?"

"Why should you doubt me?" said June. "And what temptation has poor uncle to hold out? He and I see things so differently!"

"That is true. O June, if ever you could enter the Church as uncle did—just because it was a gentlemanly profession, and he could not help doing something for a living—I think—I almost think I could leave off loving you!"

June smiled and kissed her. "You may trust me, Junia; for I will never enter the priest's office that I may eat a piece of bread."

CHAPTER XV.

Mr Odynell was not a man to keep secrets. At various times in his life he had resolved to keep certain things—things which were strictly his own business, not Mrs Odynell's—to himself. But somehow these secrets always oozed out of him involuntarily. The more he tried the more he couldn't keep them in. If he had been less porous in his composition it would have been a decided comfort and convenience to himself. It was all in consequence of this porosity that Mrs Odynell knew, long before her niece and nephew had been in the house a month, that Mr Odynell had made June the offer of going to Cambridge, and that June had declined.

" But he behaved exceedingly well about it," said Mr Odynell; " and so did poor Anne.

Of course neither of them thought she was going to die so soon, else I might have had a different answer."

"However, you must not allow yourself to be trifled with any longer," said his wife. "It was a most magnificent offer; one that few uncles would have made." Mr Odynell pricked up his ears at this: he had expected to be blamed, not praised.

"In your place, Mulgrave, I should not repeat the offer. I must say I think you owe it to yourself to let this be your *ultimatum*."

Mr Odynell was not quite so clear what it was he owed himself. "I don't think he will refuse again," he said. "Of course he knows he must do something for a living."

He thought he would get June quietly away by himself and talk to him, and persuade him gently if need be: though he did not seriously expect a refusal. But to his surprise and pain June did refuse.

"I have been thinking about it all this while, as you desired," he said; "and the more I think the more I am convinced. Once reading the ordination service would convince me, if nothing else did, that I have no vocation whatever for the Church."

"Vocation!" exclaimed Mr Odynell, impatiently.

"As if your uncle would wish you to do what was not right!" interjected Mrs Odynell, who, to Mr Odynell's extreme annoyance, had entered the library, and hearing what was going on, had seated herself as if she intended to take part in the *séance.* Mr Odynell wriggled in his chair as she drew hers to the table. He wished she would go away and leave them alone to have this talk out quietly. Why would she always interfere? But he did not venture to show his discomfort except by a wriggle. He knew that the more his Augusta supposed he wanted her to go away, the more she would sit.

June said, in reply, "I know that uncle does not wish me to do what is not right; he wishes all that is kind and good. But if I do as he wishes in this instance, I shall be doing wrong. In plain words, I shall be perjuring myself."

"Mere sophistry," said Mrs Odynell.

"Mr Odynell spoke: "The question is, June, what are you fit for? In what way are you to get your bread?"

"I believe that I am fit to be a painter," said June.

"No more of that, June. You know my opinion on that head."

"The truth is, Mulgrave," said Mrs Odynell, "that your nephew would like you to make him a handsome allowance while he amuses himself with daubing canvasses. And I'll tell you another thing, Mulgrave: that girl Junia upholds him in his opposition to you. If I were you I would put a stop to it."

June spoke with rare patience: "Suppose we leave my sister Junia out of the discussion."

Mr Odynell began to lose his temper. "June knows—and Junia too—that there is no such thing as making a living by painting. For one that does it, ninety-nine starve. It is impossible to state the case more plainly. Come, June, let us have done with trifling."

"I have no thought of trifling," said June. "It is an awfully serious question to me, and to Junia too."

"You mean that it is a question whether you will get your own living or be supported by your uncle in idleness. Do you suppose we are so blind as not to see that?" said Mrs Odynell.

"I am sorry I cannot make you understand," said June.

"Understand? I understand well enough when I see such obstinacy—such ingratitude," said Mrs Odynell.

"Augusta, Augusta!" said Mr Odynell, wriggling in his chair.

"You are far too weak, Mulgrave; far too weak. This is how people take advantage of you."

Again Mr Odynell wriggled in his anguish. Why would Augusta always interfere?

"I am the last who would take an unfair advantage of any man's kindness," said June. "I'll say good-bye, uncle. Junia and I had better go."

"Not Junia! Junia is to stay here. I won't have Junia suffer by your obstinacy," Mr Odynell exclaimed, badgered and worried beyond endurance.

Mrs Odynell put up her lip. "I should not trouble myself about either of them if I were you, Mulgrave. They uphold each other in this obstinacy and ingratitude."

"I declare I believe you are right, Augusta," said Mr Odynell, thoroughly out of temper by this time. Yet at the bottom of his heart he believed Augusta was wrong.

June went away to his studio at Islington, bidding Junia stay behind. The next morning, as he was preparing his palette, Junia walked in.

"I could not stay there any longer," she said, "to hear you abused and sneered at, and our dear dead parents blamed for letting you grow up with vagabond tastes. O June!"—and Junia began to cry—"Mrs Odynell declares you will starve. If she has said so once she has said it fifty times; and uncle shakes his head over your infatuation; and, June, what shall you do if this picture is refused?"

But June was happy this morning, and refused to take a gloomy view of things. "Let us talk of something else," he said. "How glad I am to be out of that gilded house! How glad I am to have you with me! Don't lose faith in me till I lose faith in myself, Junia mine. Let us trust God, and work hard."

"Yes, we must work hard," said Junia. "And oh, I hope God will take care of us, because we shall never get helped by uncle or aunt! She told me I could leave the house if I was going to prevent her from saying what she pleased. Well, I said I must go if she spoke ill of those I loved. Then she said, if I went I need never come back again, for she wouldn't see me. Oh, she was very angry!"

"What did uncle say?"

"What could he say, poor man? You know he is afraid of her. He said, 'Augusta, my dear! Augusta, Augusta!' and then she turned round and said she wouldn't be contradicted. I felt sorry for him."

CHAPTER XVI.

The season which is called spring is round again.

The keen wind pierced through padded doors and curtained windows, even into the silken boudoir where Mrs Odynell lay shivering and coughing on a sofa by the fire, a prey to influenza. Opposite her, in the scarlet-lined basket, Nanine shivered and whimpered. Nanine, too, had the influenza. A contented mind, they say, is a perpetual feast. Such a feast Mrs Odynell ought to have been enjoying, for things had gone well with her since last year. Some mining property she had had nearly doubled her income; her husband had not been troubled by his poor relations; and her only daughter was well married. Things temporal were indeed well with Mrs Odynell. Yet she looked as if she were an ill-used, much-enduring woman. In fact, influenza was lord of all in that boudoir, and Mrs Odynell was prostrate.

Lady Crewkerne entered, wrapped up to the nose in furs and velvet. She had been looking at the Royal Academy pictures with her mamma-in-law.

" Well," said Mrs Odynell, fretfully, " was there anything worth looking at ? "

" Not much," was the answer, with a yawn. " The rooms were not so crowded as they were last year, and that was a comfort. The new president has sent in one wretched daub. Crewkerne says he shan't paint my picture, whoever does. By the by——"

" What ? " says Mrs Odynell.

Lady Crewkerne looked through the catalogue she had brought in her hand. " It just occurred to me whether my handsome cousin had managed to get his picture in, that Junia was always raving about when she was here last year. No! His name is not there."

"I never expected it would be," said Mrs Odynell. "And I am glad it is not. It will teach him a lesson. It shows what his and Junia's obstinacy must be, that they have never given the least sign of life since that girl walked off out of the house as she did, a year ago."

"Do you know," said Lady Crewkerne, "I have an idea that June is clever, and might make his way if he had a chance."

"Don't say that to your father. I don't want any beggarly painters in the family."

"Of course," said Lady Crewkerne. "I should not say anything to Crewkerne either. But I cannot help thinking that, if June were no relation, instead of being my first cousin, I should very much like to patronise him, and send him to Rome, or something of that sort. Crewkerne would do it in a minute; but then Crewkerne is a dreadful democrat, as I tell him. I marked down two or three pictures I thought you might like to buy, if they are not sold before you are able to go and see them."

At Islington the cold wind found its way through the thin walls of the studio where June and Junia sat. The fire had gone out, unheeded.

It had come to this, that they knew they must part. They had gone on for a year, denying themselves all but the merest necessaries, hoping that June's picture might find admittance to the annual exhibition in Trafalgar Square, never doubting that, if it found admittance, it would find a purchaser. But it was not destined to find a place—not even the worst. And who would buy a rejected picture?

Of the hundreds of sad hearts mourning over rejected canvasses, June's perhaps was the saddest that day.

Junia could not bear to speak, lest her disappointment might seem to be disappointment in him. At last June put his misery into words.

"I have lost faith in myself now. It must be that I have not deserved success. Uncle Mulgrave was right when he said I was infatuated."

Then Junia, who had been weeping silently, dried her tears, and spoke in a firm, clear voice. "It is not so, June. You must be just to yourself—as just as you would be to any one else. You *have* deserved success. I should say the same, and feel the same, had you failed fifty times. I would not have you the painter of the daubs which stand in places of honour at the Academy—no, not for worlds, June!" she cried, rising and standing before him, like a vision of Hope. "I will find a way out of this. I must find some way; I cannot sit quiet and see you despair. Listen to me. I am not clever, like Anna; still, I do know something, and what I know I can teach. I will be a governess. And you shall have my salary to live on while you paint another picture."

"What! live upon your earnings?" said June. "Never!"

"Why not?" asked Junia.

June shook his head, and sat for a while in deep thought. Then he took up his hat, saying he was going out for a walk, to drive the cobwebs out of his brain.

Junia sat at home—such a poor home—with a handful of fire in the grate, this bitter day! She sat and thought—such thoughts as many are thinking every day in this life's turmoil: thoughts about daily bread; stretchings-out of hands for work; sinkings of heart because of the empty cupboard and empty purse. How many thousands are going through it all, pure and innocent souls, women whose feet were once used to tread on rose-leaves!

But Junia did not think of a rose-leaf path—only of a way to help June. So long she sat, that the afternoon sun began to send a faint gleam—the first of the day—into the room; lighting up the pictures on the wall, all hers, painted in Florence, in those happy days that were no more. She looked at them, absently at first, then she got a chair and took them down one by one, and blew the dust off the pretty Florentine frames. She would have sold them long ago but for June's strenuous opposition. They had had some plate and some good jewellery, and they had lived on its proceeds. "What do we want of silver salvers and necklaces and bracelets?" June had said. "Rather let a hundred of such trifles go than one of your pictures."

There was one—a very small one—representing Diana Vernon in the library of Osbaldistone Hall. Junia thought it the best picture she had ever painted. As she took it down from the wall she kissed it, for the face of Diana Vernon was a portrait of her sister Anna. The picture was so small that she could easily slip it under her black cloak. She dressed and went out quietly, lest the landlady should see her and suspect that she was going to sell her picture.

From Islington to Regent Street is a long way. Junia walked, slowly at first, because she feared to take wrong turnings; then hurriedly, because some idle men stared rudely at her, and she felt frightened at being so far from home without June. A policeman at a street-corner spied her as she went along, and knew—though the picture was so small—that she carried something under her cloak. For one moment he thought of following her ; but he changed his mind. "She's a good sort o' face," said this physiognomist to himself.

At last Junia reached the place she was in search of. It was a big picture-shop which she had seen during one of her rare carriage-drives, in that dreary month she and June had spent in Grosvenor Square a year ago. The windows were always full of bright bits of colour in brand-new frames, and a little crowd was always in front, admiring to its heart's content. Junia stood before the plate-glass door for a moment, feeling terribly shy and out of her place. Then whispering to herself, "It is for June," she took courage, and stepped into the warm, pleasant atmosphere of the shop. There were pictures placed here and there on the floor, and pictures on the walls ; babies being put to bed, little boys in immaculate shirts saying their prayers with mouths wide open and supernaturally staring eyes, prize pigs and piglings, flocks of silly sheep under muddy skies, young ladies reading letters—such were the subjects which met Junia's hurried glance when she entered. As to the furniture proper, there were a high desk, a big chair, and a construction, half table half counter. A fat man, with a beard and shiny hair as black as his coat, got up slowly out of his chair, and walked to the opposite side of the table on which Junia had laid her picture.

"I wish to sell this," she said, trying hard to speak in the matter-of-fact tone that might be proper to a woman who had sold pictures for a lifetime. "Will you look at it, please?"

The picture-dealer looked at her instead. "Own composition?" he inquired, briefly.

"Altogether my own," said Junia. "Diana Vernon in the library." She looked at her picture, and Anna's face smiled back at her. "Yes, it is pretty," she thought, "and it is well done. Oh, surely he will buy it!"

"Ah, now, what a pity it is," said the picture-dealer, with a fat, slow smile, "that you young ladies don't try to get husbands instead of painting pictures! You'd be much better employed—you would indeed. Get a husband, my dear—get a husband. Pictures are a drug, 'specially young ladies' pictures; but pretty girls like you ain't never a drug."

Junia placed her picture beneath her cloak, and walked swiftly out, scarlet, choking with indignation.

"Coarse-minded, coarse-mannered!" she said to herself. "What Italian would have dared insult me thus?"

Now, in very truth, she had begun to taste what poverty is, in a world where chivalry is dead, and courtesy is scant to those who cannot pay its price. From Regent Street to Islington a woman may cry her fill. Junia cried hers, with her black veil down, long before she had got home. Cried all the more, perhaps, because there was no tender mother to whom she might pour forth her grief and anger; but she must perforce keep it all to herself; for this was a thing she could not tell

June for very shame. The street-lamps were lit when she let herself in with the latch-key. She put the picture back in its place on the wall, and made herself ready to give June his tea when he came in. She waited a long time, but he came at last.

CHAPTER XVII.

June came in, and knew by the first sound of Junia's voice that she had been crying. He went up to her and kissed her hot eyelids. "Dear," he said, "you must not fret so."

"Have you thought of anything? Will you let me be a governess, you dear boy?" said Junia, coaxing him to sit down by her.

"No, my dear, no," said June, authoritatively.

"Well, then, suppose I try giving—giving drawing-lessons. I can draw, can't I, June?" with a sob.

"Can you draw?" he said, with a half-laugh. "My dear Junia! I think you can. But never mind that now. I am beaten, and must give in. You cannot help me in the way you mean."

"O June, do let me try to help you in some way or other. I'll be a servant—yes—I'll sweep out rooms—rather than see you give up."

"No, dear, it won't do. A fellow ought to know when he is beaten. Perhaps I can paint——"

"Perhaps!" came indignantly from Junia.

"But if I can, it is clear that my painting is not of the kind the British public cares to patronise. Well, man cannot live by bread alone; still it is just as true that he must have a certain quantity of bread to keep him alive."

"Of course. If we could do without eating for a year or so, it would just suit us," said Junia, with a sigh.

"Just so! But we can't. When it comes to daily bread, a man can't lead the public; the public leads him. Else, do you think I would give up painting? I'd begin a new picture this very night."

"So you might, if you would let me help you as I wish," said his sister, reproachfully.

"If I did, I should be as selfish as Bernard Palissy was when he took his wife's wedding-ring. No, Junia; I have decided."

"What?" said Junia, grieved to her inmost soul.

"I shall emigrate."

Junia repeated the word "emigrate" after him in a tone of simple wonder. "Emigrate!" It meant, to her, going a long way by sea, and being horribly sick and uncomfortable all the while; and having no pictures to look at. That was all it meant to her mind; but that seemed enough.

"Yes, I shall emigrate. And you must go back to uncle Mulgrave; you must, indeed, Junia."

"June! Go back to uncle's house, and hear you abused, and our dead father and mother sneered at? Never!" cried Junia. "If you are bent on emigrating, why, I must emigrate too."

"But there is so little money left!"

"I know that." Junia indeed knew the better of the two how little there was left. "I don't care. I will not be left behind. I daresay there will be enough left for us to go out as steerage passengers."

"We must find out how much it costs," said June. "We must be very careful of our money, dear, for fear of a rainy day coming."

"Yes," said Junia. She had thought that the rainy day was come. But if June said it was only coming, let it be so. "But, June," she said, after a pause, "there are so many places. Where do you intend to go?"

"Ah," said June, "we must think about that, and try to choose a good place. To-morrow I will begin to collect information."

So, as the cold spring creeps slowly on, these two brave, ignorant young things gather up such scraps of information as pamphlets and newspapers can give; and bend their heads together day after day over maps; and get utterly bewildered with statistics, and tables of mean temperature and rainfall. They have an idea that Canada is very hot in summer and very cold in winter. They know what "very hot" means, and they think they know what "very cold" means. "Very cold" means ever so low down in the thermometer. Just as it was at the end of one winter in Florence, says Junia, when the white camellia shrubs in the garden were covered with snow while they were in full bloom. It was very sad and chilly, but the sun soon came back and made amends. Junia wonders whether the Canadian winter is so bad after all. The pamphlets put forth by Government for the information of intending emigrants do not make it out to be so very bad; rather the contrary. You go about in sleighs, and (the newspapers say) there is capital skating. There is one part where land is to be had almost for the asking. But it has two slight drawbacks: the land is stony, and the climate is not favourable to the growth of the apple. In other words, apples won't grow. "We mustn't go there," says Junia, "because you are so fond of apples, June."

But there are plenty of other places. With a few exceptions, the whole world lies before them where to choose. There is California, where the maize grows high enough to hide brigands by the hundred—if there were any to hide—as it does in the south of Italy; where the grapes are as the grapes of Eshcol; where the roses fling their branches up into the forest-trees, and showers of fragrant petals strew the traveller's path. A delightful country, if they could only reach it! But it is too far off for such slender means as theirs.

Then, again, there is Natal. A wonderful place that. It has a yearly mean temperature of 68° (whatever that may mean, says Junia), and an absolute temperature not hotter than an English summer's day (which is not hot at all, says June). The mean temperature and the absolute temperature manage between them to give you every fruit, vegetable, or flower that you can possibly imagine, including bananas, Cape heaths, pine-apples, and oranges; also, including the slight disadvantages of being a long way off, and being subject to a thunderstorm every afternoon. "The lightning is like a broad ribbon in appearance," June reads; "and is very commonly of a bright rose tint. But the rosy hue often passes into a delicate pink, or pale blue, or lilac; or it is full orange or purple." "How jolly!" says June; "and what a pity it is so far off! It must be like fireworks. Shouldn't you like it, Junia?"

Junia declares, shuddering, that nothing will induce her to go to Natal. She is afraid of thunder and lightning. Suppose one of those pink flashes should kill June! Just as likely as not.

There are plenty of other places, says June. There is Australia. But Australia is quite at the other end of the world. There is New Zealand. But New Zealand is further off, if possible, than Australia; with the further objection, says June, that the savages might take it into their heads to eat Junia. The end of all their cogitations is, that they fix on Canada as the scene of their future labours. They think they will hire out at the same farm, and work their way up. "I shall always be civil, and do as my mistress bids me," says Junia, "and then I shall be sure to get on."

"I shall work with all my heart at anything I can get to do, and then I suppose I shall get on—in time," says June.

"Yes—in time, of course. And then we shall have a farm of our own, and poultry, and—swans, perhaps! and I shall make pies for you, and look after everything. And perhaps after a great many years you will get rich, and then you will be able to paint pictures again!"

"Don't talk of swans. We must be practical," says June, who is marking on the map that tract of country to be avoided: the stony land where apples will not grow.

CHAPTER XVIII.

It is unfortunately true that we do not always know what is good for us. It is equally true (and equally unfortunate) that other people do not always know either. And again, it is true that we and the other people think that we do know, and can never be persuaded that we are mistaken till the time is past for a remedy.

Had Junia gone, say, to Natal, it might have turned out not such a bad thing after all. A pair of strong arms and willing hands will do much for even the most inexperienced worker; and she would have grown gradually out of her fear of thunderstorms when she found that the purple flashes did not kill June. Had she gone there, or to Canada, or to any other of the outlets more or less peopled by the swarms from our crowded English beehive, the chances are that her life would have been so exceedingly monotonous, that nothing could ever have been written of it. What then? It is with women as with nations: happiest they who have no history.

Just when everything was planned so wisely—as these two ignorant ones thought—then Anna, who knew so much better, stepped in and interposed; invoking in turn the respectabilities and the proprieties and the decencies of life.

Junia remained unmoved. "June says that if he cannot live by painting, he would rather emigrate than do anything else. And what is good enough for him is certainly good enough for me."

"You are no more fit for such a life than ——. You milk cows, indeed! You know you used to turn pale if you only saw a cow at Bagni," said Anna.

"I shall have to get over my fear, that is all," said Junia. "Anything is better than being separated from June."

"It is sheer madness to talk like that," Anna returned. "You will have to give it up, and be a governess like me."

"But I am not fit for one. There are fifty things that a governess must teach, or pretend to teach, which I do not know, and will not pretend to know. There is arithmetic, for instance. I understand that two and two make four, and five and five make ten; and that is pretty nearly as far as I can go."

"How you can be so stupid passes my comprehension," said Anna, impatiently.

"No," said Junia, with a sigh, "you cannot understand it; and you never will, any more than I can understand your taking a pleasure in algebra. I believe it, that's all."

"Well, never mind the arithmetic," said Anna, "we must do without it. You can draw, and paint, and sing, and play, and talk Italian, and all that sort of thing, luckily."

Junia still protested. "There are so many things I cannot teach: it seems to me that I could do anything else better. And if my dignity does not suffer by sweeping a room or milking a cow, who else need care, I wonder?"

When Anna saw that she was immovable, she attacked June.

Poor June was taken unawares. "We are going to labour honestly to get our own living," he said; "and you talk as if we were bringing destruction on our own heads and on yours. After all, it is a very simple matter. Junia and I are poor, therefore we must work. If we wish to keep together while we work, why should we be blamed?"

But Anna endeavoured to make June understand that this plan of his would be most prejudicial to Junia. Every good thing that could ever come to her would be lost irretrievably if she emigrated with him. If he loved her truly, he must be firm, and command her to stay behind.

"But, Anna," June interposed, "Junia herself declared she would go if I went."

"It is just that," Anna sobbed. "If you walked into the deep sea and said, 'Come,' Junia would walk in straight after you and be drowned, quite as a matter of course. And you! why can't you stay at home and be respectable? A pleasing reflection it will be for me, truly, that my eldest brother is a day-labourer! And I used to feel so proud of you, June—so gentlemanly—so——"

"St Paul used to make tents, and there was One who was a carpenter's son," said June.

"Nonsense!" said Anna. "Don't talk such old-world stuff. Don't you know we are in the nineteenth century?"

But when Anna reiterated her conviction that Junia was physically incapable of bearing a Canadian winter, June found himself obliged to listen.

"It is not a question of willingness to work," Anna insisted; "it is a question of capability for work—of ability to bear the inevitable cold—the inevitable hardship of an emigrant life under the best conditions. If you love her as you say you do, unselfishly, you will at least go out first and see how things are. What so easy as for her to come to you, if you find life out there better than we expect?" There was a great deal of reason in what Anna said, June was forced to confess. Anna thought she had been very clever, and had managed very well indeed, when she got a note from her brother, saying he had persuaded Junia to stay behind. Junia, as Anna thought, would in time resign herself to the separation; and that much accomplished, it would be as easy for her to get into the new groove as it had been for Anna herself. "No, not quite as easy," thought Anna, correcting herself. "She can't adapt herself to circumstances as easily as I can; but she will do it in time. She will have to do it, of course."

But it seemed, after all, that Junia was not so incapable of adapting herself to circumstances as Anna had imagined. She wrote to Anna, telling her of June's departure; adding, "To work for him so as to help him on, is the only thing worth living for. I would be anything rather than a teacher, if I knew what; but there seems nothing else for a girl to do. I shall never be worth much; but perhaps, after a little experience, I shall be worth such a salary as will enable me to put by something to send June every year."

To get the place that Junia would suit did not turn out a very easy task, though Anna's tact and experience did succeed at last. "If everybody were as tiresomely candid and outspoken as you," she said one day in a fit of impatience, "nobody would ever get a place. Why cannot you hold your tongue, and let me manage, and just keep that arithmetic in the background?"

"But how can I take a situation on false pretences?" Junia asked. "Nobody wants you to take a situation on false pretences," Anna retorted. "You are perfectly jesuitical with your scruples." However, Anna managed for Junia, though she did lose patience with her. Thanks to Anna's exertions, Junia, before very long, found herself domiciled at a place called Nunehead Park, two hours distant from London, in the family of Mr Percy Smith, a rich iron merchant, where there were three children to teach, and the governess was made one of the family, at a salary of forty pounds a-year.

"You must remember one thing," said Anna, after giving her sister the benefit of her experience in various matters,—" you must never allow the servants to talk to you, and you must never talk to them. It was all very well to be friendly to our Italian servants — foreigners never forget their places; but friendliness towards inferiors only breeds contempt in England when the friendliness proceeds from persons in a subordinate position, like you and me. The truth is, that for one who has been brought up as a gentlewoman, there are ninety-nine who have neither breeding nor manners. For the ninety-nine, the position of governess is an immense elevation in the social scale. They don't know how to behave any better than other *parvenus* do, and it is no wonder that they get snubbed all round. It is a pity that when people do meet with a well-bred governess they cannot treat her as they would like a daughter of their own to be treated in a similar case. But they don't: it is no use arguing about it; here we are, and we must make the best of it. You will find your life a very dull and silent one; but you will get used to it, and then you won't care."

" If I can only save money for June, I shall not care for anything," Junia said. "And any degree of dulness and silence is preferable to aunt Odynell's tongue." In this last sentiment Anna concurred.

Mr Odynell was vexed and grieved when he found from Anna that June had emigrated as a poor man, and that Junia had preferred being a governess to living in his house. His wife had done her best to keep alive the displeasure he had felt at June's persistent refusal to enter the Church; but now that he heard what his nephew and niece had been driven to, his natural love for them reasserted itself, and mingled with his vexation. It was hard upon him, he thought, that he never could be as kind as he wished to his brother's children, because they themselves would not let him. He was quite low-spirited about them, and did not feel able to hide his low spirits.

But Mrs Odynell had her own opinion, and gave it him. "It will do them both good to be in a subordinate position," she said, "and you are wrong to take it to heart. They need discipline."

The discipline of love and kindness, uncle

Mulgrave thought, but he did not venture to say so.

“Junia’s conduct altogether shows her to be a girl of ill-regulated mind,” Mrs Odynell continued. “I have never been so horror-struck in my life as when I heard from you that she had wanted to go out to Canada as a steerage passenger. And to think of a girl like that being Gussie’s first cousin!”

Poor Mr Odynell took up his newspaper with a sigh. He in his inmost heart had thought that plan of Junia’s showed an admirable amount of pluck. It was foolish, no doubt—unutterably foolish. Still, a girl that would do that rather than part from her brother, must have a great deal in her, he thought. But he held his tongue and read his newspaper, as sore and vexed in spirit as a man could be. He loved his brother’s children; he said to himself that there was no helping it. He had wanted to do all sorts of kind things for them, and what was the end of all his wishing and planning? One was gone out as a poor emigrant, and two were earning their bread in other men's houses, instead of living like young ladies in his house. As for Edward, who was provided for, he was quite ready to be "tipped" to any amount; but tips to Edward did not serve as a salve to uncle Mulgrave's conscience, though he tried hard to make them serve in that way. His conscience was sore, and his heart yearned above all to June and Junia.

"If ever Junia wants anything, tell her to apply to me," he said to Anna. And Anna gave the message faithfully.

But Junia smiled. "He means very well, poor man; but I shall never ask him for anything. He would give it to me, no doubt; but he would be so afraid of his wife finding it out, that he would go about like a man who had committed a great crime. And you observe, Anna, he does not ask me to go and see him."

"That is true," said Anna; "he does not dare to do it. If *I* were married I should be ashamed to behave so that my husband was afraid of me."

CHAPTER XIX.

For some weeks after her arrival at Nunehead Park, Junia was quite alone with her two youngest pupils, Molly and Percy. The eldest, she was told, was quite a grown-up young lady, and was away paying visits with her mamma and her aunt, Miss Kate Smith, a sister of Mr Percy Smith's, who lived in the house.

The schoolroom and nurseries and governess's room were at one end of the house, and did not interfere with a long series of reception-rooms and guest-chambers, which were at present shut up. In some of these rooms were grand pictures, so Junia was told; so that she felt doubly interested on hearing that the family were expected home, to be followed by a crowd of visitors. She did not care about seeing the visitors; they would be strangers to her, and with them, naturally, she could have nothing to do. But she wished very much to look at the pictures, and to become acquainted with the grown-up members of the family. After a few weeks of the children's society, it was natural she should wish to exchange thoughts with people more of her own age. And she had been told beforehand that she would be treated like one of the family.

It was with a sort of repressed eagerness that she went into the great dining-room at Molly's request, on the day the rooms were opened, and the covers taken off the furniture, to be shown Mrs Percy Smith's picture—a full-length over the chimney-piece.

"That's mamma," said Molly, proudly. "It cost heaps of money; and the man who painted it painted the Queen's picture. Only think of that!"

Junia stood and looked at the picture with anxious eyes. What sort of woman was she who would rule over her? Was she stern?

Was she loving? She had indeed seen Mrs Percy Smith; but she could not tell at all what her face was like. She knew that she was a very tall woman: so was Mrs Odynell. Also, that she spoke in a voice of authority: and so did Mrs Odynell. She wore a very long train too, which was another point of resemblance to Mrs Odynell. And that was all Junia knew. For, in the interview preceding her engagement, she had been so cowed by the voice of authority and the long list of questions (which did not alarm Anna at all), that her heart had begun to beat, and her head to swim, and her courage to sink down into her shoes. It had seemed to her as if a committee of Smiths would instantly sit and inquire into her deficiencies in the matter of angles, and surds, and square roots. For, said Mrs Percy Smith, there would be in her schoolroom a very clever little boy, who was kept at home because he was too delicate for a public school yet. And Junia supposed that all clever little boys learnt Euclid and algebra. But her attainments in that line seemed to be taken for granted, for the subject was dismissed. Then, Mrs Percy Smith had asked, could Miss Berrington conscientiously undertake to teach Italian with a pure accent? and first-rate singing and piano? also drawing (painting if required)? Yes, Junia had been glad to say, she could conscientiously teach those things. "But now for history," the poor young candidate had thought; "and I never could remember a date!" But the history, like the algebra, had been taken for granted. Lastly, Mrs Percy Smith had asked, Did Miss Berrington clothe herself according to the requirements of the season? In plain words, did she wear a flannel petticoat? Because once Mrs Percy Smith had had a French person in the house who had actually fallen ill from not wearing a flannel petticoat, and had caused a vast deal of trouble and expense. Yes, Junia had faltered, blushing, she did wear a flannel petticoat. Whereupon the inquiry had closed, and she was told she might consider herself engaged. Junia had felt afterwards as if she had passed through a great ordeal. But would she not have passed through a greater than this for the sake of getting money to help June?

"Will she like me? Will she be kind to me?" Junia thought, as she looked at the lady's picture. "Perhaps not at first; but afterwards, when she sees that I am faithful and do my duty towards the children, then, surely——"

At last the important day came. Towards dusk there was a noise of carriage-wheels, and the general stir throughout the house, the lighting up, and ringing of bells, and passing to and fro, which happens when a great empty house is filled all at once. The schoolroom maid bringing in Junia's candle, informed her that the master and mistress were come, and Miss Georgina and Miss Kate, and a deal of company. "And more to come, they say; and we servants will be worn off our legs," was the maid's opinion. Junia made some change in her dress, and sat up later than her wont, half expecting that Mrs Percy Smith would come in and shake hands, and ask how the children were getting on; but nobody came except the schoolroom maid, who brought her supper; and she went to bed, feeling a little disappointed.

Molly came to her next morning, pouting, with her sash in her hand.

"Will you tie it properly, Miss Berrington? Nurse won't take the trouble. She is dressing Georgie, and Georgie says it doesn't matter how my sash is tied; but I say it does matter. I hate nurse, and I hate Georgie—I do."

"O Molly, Molly!" said Junia, "you should love your elder sister."

Molly laughed. "You're shocked, eh?"

"I am, indeed."

"I never shall love Georgie, not if I live to be 'Thuselah," said Molly, who was the ugly one of the family, and nobody's pet, as Junia afterwards found out. "Georgie thinks herself so fine, and she is such a toad. But I love *you*. There! And I'll tell you what, you shall go down-stairs with me, hand in hand. Prayer-bell will ring in a minute, and then down everybody goes; and we must look sharp, else the door will be shut, and you and me will get left outside like two foolish virgins. Come along!"

Junia made a note of the bad grammar in Molly's speech, but said nothing. If she corrected every ungrammatical speech that Molly made, she would do nothing else. How long, she asked herself with a little sigh, would she have to correct day by day, here a little and there a little, before it became natural to Molly to use her pronouns properly? But her heart warmed to the ugly child, and she felt strengthened for her daily task by Molly's frank declaration of love.

Guided by Molly, Junia found herself at the head of the grand-staircase just as the lady of the house emerged from her room. Molly ran up to kiss her mother; Junia waited a moment, and then approached, bidding Mrs Percy Smith good-morning. Mrs Percy Smith was holding up her dress with one hand, Molly held by the other. She looked steadily at Junia and said—

"Good-morning. Perhaps, Miss Berrington, you are not aware that it is the rule in my house for the governess to use the back-staircase."

Junia looked up at her—Mrs Percy Smith was five feet nine, and appeared taller—Junia looked up at her in pure astonishment.

“ Mrs Greg ought to have told you. I shall speak to her about it.” Mrs Greg was the housekeeper.

Mrs Percy Smith continued : “ I am quite aware, Miss Berrington, that the custom is not universal, but I have very strong views as to the ordering of a household. I wish my governess to be one of the family, and every member of my family has his and her appointed place. ‘ Order is heaven’s first law,’ as the poet Milton so beautifully says.” (Pope, Junia was on the point of saying, but checked herself.) “ But of course,” she continued, graciously, “ you could not be expected to know my rule, as you were not told of it. I never expect what is unreasonable. So we will go down to the dining-room together this morning.”

Junia, with a burning face, and eyes fixed on the train of Mrs Percy Smith’s dress, crept down the grand-staircase for the first and last time, and followed the lady into the dining-room, followed in her turn by a troop of servants. Then the door was shut. Mistress and children and visitors knelt in one group; the servants knelt in their proper places, near the door, and Junia knelt in her proper place, pointed out to her by Mrs Percy Smith herself—a spot clearly separate from either group—a galilee as it were; and then they all bewailed themselves more or less loudly, led by the strong voice of Mrs Percy Smith. Miserable sinners! miserable sinners! No voice was so loud as the voice of Mrs Percy Smith.

Only Junia's voice was mute. She, in her galilee, wondered what that lady had been doing, that she groaned forth her confession thus dolefully. The governess's mind was in any but a devotional attitude. She felt disconcerted, humbled, indignant, as one woman feels who has received some small social insult from another woman, which she could neither guard against nor resent. Perhaps her feeling of the insult might have gone deeper but for a sense of humour which she possessed, and a certain amount of common-sense, which did her quite as much service as the most lofty philosophy. Thought she to herself, as she knelt in her galilee—" Mrs Percy Smith is confessing that she did not remind Mrs Greg to tell me to use the back-stairs. That is one of the things she has left undone. Well, back-staircase, grand-staircase, it will be all the same a hundred years hence for me and for her."

Yet Junia could not help feeling a little sad. This was but a straw, it was true; but one straw is as good as another to show which way the wind blows. Would such a woman as this be the woman to love her and be a friend to her? Such a thing could not be. "Well," thought Junia, in conclusion, "it can't be helped. I must do my duty by the children all the same."

Molly flew to her as soon as prayers were finished. "Come along! Breakfast in the schoolroom for you and me."

Junia took the child's hand with a grateful sense of the protection it afforded. Her heart quaked as she wound her way out, dragged by the impatient Molly through a crowd of dispersing servants and gentlemen guests who were descending just too late for the family service. "The cows would not have been half as formidable as this," thought Junia, when the shelter of the schoolroom was reached, and the door was shut between her and the strangers who stared at her so, wondering who she was.

Junia became accustomed to the back-stairs and the galilee in time; but there was one household ceremony which she felt no length of use could harden her to: this was the Sunday-evening tea in the drawing-room. On these occasions Mrs Percy Smith sat at a well-furnished table, while the members of the family and the guests drew near, or had their cups carried to them. When every one was served, Mrs Percy Smith called to Junia in her distant corner by a table, where the magazines were to be found, "Miss Berrington, will you come and take your tea?" Thus addressed, Junia would rise and walk the length of the long drawing-room, and drink a cup of tea, sitting silent as a ghost (for ghosts never speak unless they are spoken to) opposite Mrs Percy Smith; and then steal along that interminable expanse of carpet, and back to her corner till bed-time came.

Once Mrs Percy Smith by mistake handed Junia her own cup with plenty of cream in it, and took for herself the cup she had intended for Junia, into which she had poured skim-milk, of which a *modicum* was always placed on the tea-tray on Sunday evenings for the use of the governess. "You've taken the wrong milk, ma'am," said the butler, when his mistress complained of the badness of the cream. Junia gravely drank her cup of tea, and found the cream very good. "It will be all the same a hundred years hence, for her and for me," she thought, with some slight inward amusement at the *contretemps*.

But she was sad sometimes, and dull, as Anna had told her she would be. She wrote to her brothers and sister, and had their letters to read—not very frequent ones, for all were busy in their various ways. But, even had the letters been more frequent, Junia could not at times have helped feeling the want of a living voice to speak to—the want of a little pleasant daily intercourse on terms of equality. This could not be had; it was not in the bond. Junia's hours of recreation, when the children were with their parents, or after they were gone to bed, were passed in as absolute silence as if she had belonged to an order of female Trappists. "It is all in the day's work," she would say, by way of comforting herself in her loneliness. "It is better than being useful companion to aunt Odynell, with no fixed salary; better than painting pictures nobody will buy. And Molly is very fond of me, and is improving."

Yes, Molly's love for Junia helped her even more than Junia herself knew. Yet even the child's love had its own little thorn to prick her. And Molly herself, the veriest little pitcher that ever plagued a house, was the one to drive the thorn into Junia. "Georgie told ma I kissed you, and ma said I wasn't to. Ma said I wasn't to be familiar to 'feriors; and Georgie said I had low tastes. I don't care!

I know you're a real lady — nurse said you were — and I shall kiss you when I choose. There!" And what could Junia do but kiss the child again?

June wrote by-and-by from Canada, saying how glad he was that she had not gone out with him. In a few years, if he should be so fortunate as to save a little money, he might take a tract of uncleared land, or even buy land that had been partially cleared—and then perhaps Junia might come to him; but not before. He must smooth her path first; though, smooth it as he might, he feared that by contrast her life would be terribly rough, compared to the life she had hitherto led. Junia was patient, and willing as ever to defer to June's judgment. Yet sometimes it seemed as if the roughest life she could imagine would be better than the dumb life she was leading at Nunehead. She did not tell June so. What brightness there was in her life she let him see: a beautiful house and pictures and gardens, and the love of little Molly Smith, and the forty pounds a-year.

CHAPTER XX.

More than fifty-two silent Sunday evenings had been spent by Junia in her corner of the drawing-room. She had dreaded them less lately, because on the table near which she sat there was a magazine which had in it a story about Florence, with beautiful little vignettes, representing different buildings of the ancient city. To read the story and look at the pictures was the one pleasure which Sunday evening had in store for her. If a tear dropped on the page now and then, it was a tear of loving grateful remembrance rather than of pain. "How happy we all were!" she would think. "How well our parents loved us!" Echoes and fragments of talk came now and then as far as the distant corner. She heard, but gave no heed. What had she to do with the friends of the family, or the family's likes or dislikes? Her duties to the children ended, there was no recognised link between the family and her. So she sat and read in her usual silence this evening, as on all such evenings. Suddenly she was roused by a word, which made her change her position as an indifferent bystander to that of a person deeply interested in what was taking place. That word was "Kinnaird."

Junia sat upright in her seat, and involuntarily listened. "Had she heard the word wrong? or had she been thinking of the man—the man who had amused himself by making her fall in love with him?" she asked herself with some scorn. No, she had not been thinking of him; she never wasted a thought on him: yet something whispered that this was not quite true; that sometimes, when she was very weary and dull, she had speculated on the vast difference it might have made to her had Mr Kinnaird been quite a different sort of man. "There was not much harm in that," she said to herself in her self-defence.

That was quite another thing to pining after after him. "If I pined after him I should deserve to die," thought Junia, her pride all up in arms. She felt angry with herself now for being interested. What was the name to her, that her heart should beat so fast at the mere mention of it? "I did not know I was such a fool!" she said to herself; yet she sat up and listened.

There were but few people in the drawing-room on this evening. There were an old gentleman and two old ladies, who were all asleep. Mr Percy Smith was asleep in his arm-chair, with his Sunday newspaper on his knees. The children had their Sunday toys in one corner, and Mrs Percy Smith and her daughter and sister-in-law were seated together on a lounge, not very far from Junia's corner. It was one of them who had said the word "Kinnaird." Then she heard fragments such as . . . "blue room" . . . "cannot possibly make up more than twenty-two beds unless" . . . "I won't have pink; lilac, I think, or grey . . . ;" and then, in Mrs Percy Smith's authoritative voice — "It may turn out well, but you know that Mr Kinnaird is so spoilt that there is no putting up with him. And the disparity is on the wrong side."

There was the name again! Junia did not doubt that she had really heard it a minute before; she had not imagined it, if there was any comfort in that. What then? Surely there were other Kinnairds in the world besides the one she had known; Kinnairds, let it be hoped, truer and worthier than this man who had amused himself with a girl's heart. She would not waste a thought—no, not even a conjecture—on *him*. This frame of mind gave additional firmness to her gait, and she walked across the drawing-room, when summoned to come and take her tea, with the dignity of a woman who knows what is due to herself, rather than the timid shrinking of the girl who knows she is as nobody, and yet is in everybody's way.

For the first time Mr Percy Smith remarked her as she passed. He was often away on these Sunday evenings; and when at home he was generally asleep. He had heard that his wife had engaged a young person to replace the last governess, and he had asked whether the young person seemed likely to answer. He knew her name just as much as he knew the name of his wife's maid, and his interest in either was about equal. Now for the first time he saw, and looked so as to know her again — the young person who taught the children for forty pounds a-year.

"Georgie can't do better than copy a walk such as that," he said to his wife, when the governess had drunk her cup of tea and had passed back again to her corner. "It's splendid, by Jove! splendid! Has she Spanish blood in her?"

"How should I know?" said Mrs Percy Smith; and she and Miss Smith again bent their heads together in consultation. "I must talk to Mrs Greg about it to-morrow," said the lady of the house, as Junia passed by with a timid "good-night."

CHAPTER XXI.

Mrs Greg quickly found a way to make up more than the twenty-two beds. "Send Miss Berrington and the children to the north lodge while the company is here," she said. "There are two very nice little rooms that can be got ready for Miss Molly and Master Percy, and a little one up in the roof that will do for Miss Berrington, and nurse Anderson can do for them. It will be a good thing to have no schoolroom meals to get, and the schoolroom maid can help wherever she's wanted." So Junia found herself sent off on short notice on Monday morning to the north lodge with Molly and Percy, who were received by Mrs Anderson with a smiling face and a profusion of caresses.

"I nursed them all, every one of 'em," she said to the governess. "An' I've whipped 'em an' put 'em in the corner many a time. I've heerd tell o' you, miss. Miss Molly's always talking about you, and I tell her old nursey will be jealous."

There was something about the woman that made Junia wish to be better acquainted with her. But she was afraid to talk to her, or let herself be talked to, lest, as Anna said, familiarity should breed contempt.

"I should like to live here for ever with you, Berry," said Molly, before two days were over. "I have wished a wish."

"What is it, Molly?"

"I wish something to happen in the schoolroom. I wish those globes would get burnt up. I do hate globes!"

Junia shook her head. "That is a wicked wish, Molly."

"I like wicked wishes," said the unregenerate elf as she ran away.

"Come back, Molly. Tell me the names of the people at the house," said Junia. But she had scarcely said the words before she felt ashamed of her curiosity.

"I don't know," said Molly. "They are not all come yet. Some are coming from Paris by the tidal train. What is a tidal train, Miss Berrington?"

The children were to go into the dining-room for dessert that evening, and Junia was desired to dress herself to appear in the drawing-room after dinner. There would be music, and she would be wanted to play an accompaniment, or take part in a duet with Georgina Smith. The children went up to the house early, and Junia dressed herself early, that she might have a ramble in the greenhouses and conservatory before the twilight ended. Mr Anderson, the head-gardener (father-in-law to nurse Anderson) was in the greenhouse she first entered. He touched his hat and looked pleased.

"Are you come to look at the night-blooming cereus, miss? You will find it a little higher towards the right."

"Thank you," said Junia, and went towards it.

Mr Anderson followed. "If you could but be here by twelve o'clock," he said. "Nobody in this house knows what that flower is except myself."

"But I know," said Junia. "I had a dozen of these plants when I lived in Florence; and they flowered in the open air, not in a greenhouse, like this poor plant."

"Indeed! miss. Well, exotics in this country have their trials; but I think I contrive to keep mine pretty comfortable."

"So this cereus would say if it could speak. You have no idea of the pleasure it gives me to see a cereus again," she said, with moistened eyes. For did it not remind her of Florence!

The gardener was pleased at her appreciation. To show his pleasure, he went and cut for her one of his choicest roses. "I suppose you'll be in the drawing-room to-night, miss? I've brought you a rose for your hair. This is the *Rosa microphylla*, miss, the Chinese anemone-flowered rose, a rare and delicate plant, which baffles a good many, but doesn't baffle *me.* For why? because I know its ways."

"Oh, thank you! thank you!" cried Junia; "I do so love flowers. I love them all."

"Ah! How long before you will be going into the drawing-room? A half an hour, perhaps. Well, then, I'll have just time to do you up a bouquet."

"Oh, thank you!" said Junia, impulsively. Then, hesitating, "I think I had better not carry a bouquet, perhaps. But if you could give me a rose or two——"

"As you please, miss," said the civil Mr Anderson. In a moment the roses were picked for her—white, red, and pink. Junia, blushing with pleasure, thanked the donor and ran into the library close by, to stick them in her hair and in her waistband. It seemed like old times—the dear old times—when she was used thus to adorn herself from her Florence garden. Back for one more look at the cereus, and then she must go, for the ladies would be leaving the dining-room. She ran into the greenhouse and stood before the plant. The gardener had been going round all this while, examining the plants and puffing tobacco-smoke at them. "The cereus is still expanding," she said, as his step came nearer. She looked up smiling as she spoke, and met the eyes—not of the gardener, but of Leicester Kinnaird, in full evening dress. He started. There was just that change in her face which is natural when we expect to see a friend and see a stranger instead: that was all.

She was about to move away; but he said, "Miss Berrington!" in a tone of genuine surprise, and that stopped her for an instant.

"That is my name," she said, coldly. Then she turned to leave the greenhouse.

"Miss Berrington! have you quite forgotten me?" he cried, in the tone of a man who feels himself ill-used.

"Just as much as you have forgotten me," she answered, with calmness, determined that he should see how indifferent she was; though in her heart she did not feel indifferent—for at the sight of him the old pain, the mingled disappointment and indignation, had come back.

"I have never forgotten you!" he said, indignantly.

"We need not enter on that subject now. Will you please let me pass?" said Junia, at the entrance to the library.

"Wait! Let me explain. I must explain," said Mr Kinnaird.

"Excuse me," Junia said, and passed on. There was a slight stir at the furthest end of the library; the dining-room door had opened, and a long line of ladies was passing across to the drawing-room. Junia quickened her pace, and reached the door just as it was about to close on Miss Kate Smith. Only one person saw a white-robed figure glide silently towards a dark corner behind the grand piano. That person was Miss Stubbes. She and Miss Graham had arrived late that afternoon.

"Conny!" she called, brandishing her double eye-glass. "Conny, come here!"

Miss Graham, on her entrance, had made straight for an easy-chair, and was already ensconced in it. "Willy, your voice goes through my head. I am not going to look at anything to-night, so don't ask me." And she resolutely shut her eyes. Miss Stubbes went up to her. "What is the matter?" she asked, peremptorily.

"Leicester has been in the house for the last three hours—I know it, because my maid told me—and he won't show; pretends he is tired. As if he could be more tired than I am!"

"Shall I go and poke him up?" said Miss Stubbes, with alacrity.

"No," Conny drawled. "It would be no good."

"I suppose not; but I'll do it if you like."

Miss Graham sighed. "If I had thought he was going to behave in that way, after we were engaged, I——"

"Nonsense, Conny. After getting all your *trousseau*——"

"Oh yes, I know. But he might have condescended to make himself agreeable just to begin with."

"You couldn't expect him to condescend to anything, after condescending to come here to marry you," said Miss Stubbes.

"Coming here, indeed! I'm sure Maria is ladylike enough, and Mr Percy Smith is not so bad. And there's money enough, if she did marry beneath her. I'm sure everything is quite *princière*."

"Yes," said Miss Stubbes, "so it is. Yet when I think of Leicester Kinnaird's family, I can't help feeling that he condescends in marrying from this house. Money is a fine thing, but there's nothing like blood. Nothing," reiterated Miss Stubbes, shaking her head. "That was always my feeling, from a girl. Blood cannot take to itself wings and fly away. Money does, and health does, and beauty does. Therefore, I say, stick to blood."

Miss Graham yawned. "Oh yes, I know all that. I suppose I feel gloomy because I am tired. I'll see if I can't slip away and get to bed. I daresay Maria won't mind."

"Why, there is Leicester!" cried Miss

Stubbes. "Leicester!" Mr Kinnaird made his way slowly towards the two ladies. "I missed the tidal train from Paris," he said, "and had altogether such a disagreeable journey, that I thought I had better lie *perdu* till to-morrow; but second thoughts are sometimes best," he said, glancing at Miss Graham, who was sitting up, and looking not at all tired or sleepy.

"I called to you, Conny, just now," said Miss Stubbes, "to tell you I saw a girl so very like Junia Berrington." Conny Graham gave a little exclamation of pleasure. "Where is she? Let me look. I was always fond of her, though you were not, Willy." And Miss Graham actually got up, and began walking to the other end of the room. Leicester stopped her. "Let me bring her to you," he said.

Junia, in the obscure corner where Molly bore her company, saw him detach himself from a remote group and come straight to where she sat. "That's the bridegroom; he's going to marry mamma's cousin," Molly whispered, as he approached with a smile and a grace that Junia was forced to pronounce inimitable. "Anybody might believe him," she thought, "with a face and a smile like that. How should I have known?" It had seemed to her just before that it would be impossible for her ever to speak to Mr Kinnaird again, or even be near him again, if she could help it; yet when he came up, with a low bow and that inimitable smile, saying that an old friend—Miss Graham—wished to speak to her, Junia found herself rising to accompany him to the other end of the room as readily as if she were a puppet and he the showman. But the fascination only lasted as long as he was silent. He spoke, and Junia was herself again.

"It is a long time since we met, Miss Berrington," he said.

"Yes," Junia replied, briefly.

"So you have quite forgotten me!"

"I suppose I should have known you in the street."

"Is that all? Once I thought you loved me, Junia."

She looked at him proudly. "Once I thought you loved *me*, Mr Kinnaird. I was a girl then, and knew no better. I do not think you could deceive me again, even if you tried." Junia thought that in speaking thus plainly she had vindicated herself to her own conscience for that single instance of fascination.

"You make me miserable," he said, bending down and speaking low. "Do not speak in that way—do not look so cold and stern. I could explain everything if you would but listen."

"I wish for no explanation," said Junia. "Your silence was quite enough, Mr Kinnaird. Let me say again, that I would rather not refer to what is past. Our paths lie far apart, and so it is best."

"You are unjust," he exclaimed. "I have a right to be heard, and——"

But Junia, who had recognised Miss Graham and Miss Stubbes at the other end of the room, walked quickly up to them, and Kinnaird was forced to leave the sentence unfinished.

Miss Stubbes gave her two fingers; but

then Junia had never been a favourite with Miss Stubbes. Miss Graham opened her arms to her and kissed her heartily. Junia was surprised at the kiss and warm embrace, and still more surprised to find herself returning them with equal heartiness; for at Florence she had only liked Miss Graham moderately.

"My dear!" said Miss Graham, kissing her again, "to think of our meeting here of all places! I have never visited Maria before. And now—on this occasion of all others—I am so delighted! I need not present Mr Kinnaird—such an old acquaintance. I suppose you have heard all about it?" she added, in a sort of *sotto voce*, which did not escape Kinnaird's ear, and annoyed him infinitely.

Junia answered the *sotto voce* quite audibly, "I had not been told, but I can guess, and I wish you both joy."

"I am much obliged to you," said Kinnaird, with a bow, as he walked away. Miss Graham looked after him, smiling. Junia saw that he was exceedingly annoyed, and smiled inwardly. It was but fair, she thought, that he too should feel some annoyance. And it was not altogether unpleasant to think that perhaps he was annoyed because of what she had said, and even because of her mere presence by the side of Miss Graham. Miss Graham smiled, and saw nothing except a handsome man with courtly manners. "Isn't he the most perfect gentleman you ever saw?" she said, turning to Junia.

"He has a very fine manner," said Junia, evading the question.

"Junia, dear, I should so like you to be one of my bridesmaids," said Miss Graham, who, after thinking for a moment whether it would be a solecism to have an uneven number of bridesmaids, had decided that if it were, she would risk it for the sake of old acquaintance.

"It would be impossible," Junia exclaimed. "Don't you know that I am governess here, Miss Graham?"

"Oh!" said Conny, opening her eyes very wide, "I didn't know that. My dear, you must forgive me. After we went to Bagni—you remember—that year of the cholera——"

"Indeed I have reason to remember it," said Junia.

"We were all ill—that is, Willy was ill from fright, and I fell ill with nursing her; and Mr Kinnaird—who had kindly gone on to get rooms for us—he was ill too, for a long time. I ought to remember that summer, for I was quite miserable all the time—Willy was so cross. She was ill, it is true; but, as I used to say to Mr Kinnaird, she need not have been quite so cross. Well, my dear, we heard all sorts of things about you. We heard one day that you were dead——"

"I!" Junia exclaimed.

"Yes; and I assure you it gave me quite a shock; and Mr Kinnaird turned as white as a sheet. Then afterwards we heard that it was not true. When we went back to Florence, I called at Casa Falconieri, and tried to find out where you were; but I could only hear that you were gone to London. Now tell me——"

"Not now; please don't ask me anything now," said Junia, struggling with her emotion. "I must go. Good-bye."

Unconsciously Miss Graham had made herself Mr Kinnaird's apologist to a certain degree, but not so far as to exonerate him in Junia's estimation. "Never a word—never a line," she said to herself, remembering the complete silence with which Leicester Kinnaird had severed the link just formed between himself and her. Could they have changed places, would anything—even sickness—have prevented her from writing to him? She felt glad that she had shown him with what contempt she now regarded him; but she acknowledged to herself the last thing at night that the sooner the wedding was over and the guests gone, the better for her. It would be all the same a hundred years hence, certainly: but now she was disturbed and vexed; for she could not but think of Mr Kinnaird, and it did not please her to be thinking of him in any way whatever.

CHAPTER XXII.

EARLY the next morning a message came to Junia to go up to the house, for Mrs Percy Smith wished to speak to her. Desiring Mrs Anderson to give the children their breakfast, she prepared to go. Mrs Anderson looked at her and said, "Don't 'ee look as if 'ee was going to be hung. Missus can't ate 'ee up, ma dear."

"What do you mean?" said Junia, coldly. She was conscious that she wished very much for the interview with Mrs Percy Smith to be over; for in these interviews—which were happily very rare—the time was usually spent in finding fault with things which Junia felt to be beyond her control; such as Percy's occasional fits of passion, and Molly's awkward ways—defects which she had noted and deplored herself from the first, but which the training of one year, or even of two, could not eradicate. These interviews were "in the bond," and therefore Junia bore them; but it was not in human nature to like them. Nor was it in human nature to feel otherwise than annoyed that a servant should have discovered that she did not like them.

"Ah! if you don't know what I mean, so much the better for you, ma dear soul," said Mrs Anderson, with a twinkle of amusement in her eye. "Go up the garden way," she said, as Junia stepped outside the lodge gate; "and keep on the gravel; you'll be ankle-deep in dew else."

Junia nodded, and did as she was advised.

"I wouldn't be in your shoes, no, not for a guinea a-day," Mrs Anderson soliloquised, as she looked after her. "As for missus, her hath a big, fat, bouncing body, her hath; and her's a tarrable un to talk. But her ain't so bad arter all, so soon as her knows that we knows 'tis all bounce an' talk. As for she"—with a jerk of her head in the direction Junia had taken—"I niver see sich a poor trimblin' slave in all my born days. To look at her, one would think missus could take a whip to her if her liked. If her an' missus don't agree, why don't her try a change an' better herself? Her ain't bumptious enough by half, that's what her ain't," concluded Mrs Anderson.

The great house, sunk in sleep when Junia began her walk, woke slowly as the sun rose higher. Blinds were drawn up, shutters unclosed; here and there a face was seen at a window. Mrs Percy Smith was up and in her boudoir. She laid down her coffee-cup and stared at Junia when she entered, after knocking.

"I was told you wished to speak to me," said Junia, in explanation.

"Oh!" Mrs Percy Smith rose, and began a hasty search on her writing-table. "Where are my tablets?" she cried. "No, don't look—don't meddle with this table. I never allow any one to meddle with this table. There they are! Of course I knew I had put them somewhere. Wait a moment!" She ran rapidly over the contents of the tablets. "'Molly's dress too short'—that's not it. 'Governess—dress—Molly over-eating'—that's it. Yes. You may sit down, Miss Berrington. I see what it was I wanted to speak to you about. My multifarious duties oblige me to make use of a kind of *memoria technica.* These little tablets remind me of things past as well as of things future. It is a sad drawback to have a short memory."

"Yes," said Junia, "I suppose it must be inconvenient."

"What with my short memory, and my duties as the head of this large household, I assure you that at times I am on the verge of being overwhelmed—overwhelmed."

Mrs Percy Smith sighed as she concluded this speech. Then, having finished her coffee, she informed Junia why she had sent for her.

"I wished to impress on you the importance of not allowing Molly to over-heat or to over-eat herself on the day after to-morrow."

"The day after to-morrow!" Junia murmured.

"Yes; the wedding-day, of course. Miss Graham has begged for the children to be present, and I have consented, rather foolishly I fear. Pray give me your attention, Miss Berrington. I have observed in Molly both the tendencies I have mentioned; and it is important that both should be counteracted; for, if one is fatal to the digestion, both are fatal to the complexion—of a girl. Pray bear this well in mind. Wait a moment!"—for Junia had moved on her chair as though she would have risen. "As the children are to be at the wedding, both at church and at the breakfast, of course you must be there too, and——"

"What! at the breakfast?" Junia exclaimed.

"Of course, else how are you to look after Molly? It will be rather inconvenient, but it can't be helped. I suppose you have something fit to wear?"

"Indeed I have not," said Junia.

"Well, you must do the best you can. Anything will do; it doesn't matter much, as long as it is not black. You will be there simply to look after the children, you know. You can go, Miss Berrington."

Thus dismissed, Junia went down-stairs and into the garden. As she went down the broad gravel-path, she began to think over,—hardly to calculate,—what chance there was of escaping from her part—such a poor part at the best—at the coming ceremony. If she had been ordered to come in after the bride and bridegroom were gone she would not have minded much; but to be at church and at the breakfast! She felt that it would be—not exactly painful — but disagreeable; almost too disagreeable to be borne.

"I can't help myself," she said, half aloud. "Here I am, and I must put up with it. But oh, I wish I were a thousand miles away!"

Somebody opened a window and called her by her name. It was Miss Graham. Junia turned back reluctantly. She would only stay a minute, she thought, as she went up-stairs and knocked at the door—presumably—of Miss Graham's room. A muffled voice bid her enter. She opened the door and found herself in a room redolent of Rimmel's toilet-vinegar and other smells popularly known as perfumes. The blinds were down, and in the gloom she saw a person in a scarlet flannel dressing-gown who was standing at a toilet-table, strewed with little china pots and bottles, and such-like ware. This person was peering with her nose quite close to the glass, and was rubbing her forehead with a bit of cotton-wool.

"What do you want, Conny?" The speaker turned round, and Junia found herself confronted by Miss Stubbes, who instantly assumed an attitude of lofty and unapproachable dignity.

"Oh!" she said, wheeling round so that whatever light there was should fall on Junia's face rather than her own.

Junia quailed before that hooked nose and those fierce eyebrows. She gave one timid, hurried look, and in that look became conscious that one eyebrow was fiercer than the other. She stood blushing at having seen it. What could she do? How angry Miss Stubbes would be!

"Oh!" cried Miss Stubbes—her nose and the rest of her face had turned very red, but her forehead remained serene and white—"may I ask the reason of this intrusion?" in tones which were the reverse of benignant.

Junia faltered—"I beg a thousand pardons. I have come to the wrong room," and retreated hastily. She felt half afraid to knock at the next door. The next door, however, did turn out to be Miss Graham's; and Miss Graham herself, in the freshest of toilets, and with all signs of painting hidden away, received her with open arms. Junia was kissed and called "a dear thing"—Miss Graham called everybody she liked "a dear thing"—and was made to sit down on the sofa, while Miss Graham, holding her hand, asked innumerable questions about herself and her family.

"I was never so sorry to hear about anything in my life," she said, with her handkerchief to her eyes, when Junia had satisfied her friendly curiosity. "Junia, dear, you don't look very happy, and I don't wonder at it, after all you have gone through. I am so sorry."

"I am happy enough," said Junia, bracing herself up. "Everybody cannot expect to have things smooth and pleasant. I am happy enough — as happy, that is, as I can hope to be, away from June."

"Ah!" Miss Graham shook her head. "You have managed very badly somehow. The idea of a girl with your good looks being a governess! My dear, you have relations who are well off. How was it you didn't get married ages ago?"

"Some people are marrying people, and some are not, I suppose."

"I have come to the conclusion," said Miss Graham, "that every woman ought to marry. I used to think I wouldn't be in a hurry, and all that; and of course, with plenty of money of my own, there was no need for me to be in a hurry. But I have made up my mind at last, and on the whole, perhaps it is just as well. I daresay we shall be at Florence a good deal after we are married. Should you not like to come and see me, Junia?"

"I should like to see Florence again, but I don't think I shall ever be able to see it, —not in that way at least."

"Oh, but you must. Junia, promise me this: write to me if you find you don't get on comfortably here. I believe you suit Maria very well at present, but Maria may change her mind. If ever you want a change yourself, write to me; I shall always be delighted to have you. And—I'll tell you a secret," said Miss Graham, kissing her, "I have made up my mind to turn matchmaker after I am married, and I should like to make a beginning with you."

Junia could not help laughing. "But I am not one of the marrying people," she said.

"Ah, my love, that's all nonsense," said the bride-elect. "Perhaps you will change your mind when you have seen my wedding. You are to be there, of course; I have arranged it all. I should have liked to have you as bridesmaid, but Maria seemed to think it wouldn't do. I managed cleverly, though. When I found you were wanted for the children, I asked the children. Now, Junia, promise me you won't mope and sit in corners."

"I suppose I must sit where I am put; and as to moping, you may be sure I'll answer if anybody speaks to me."

"If it were anybody but myself that were going to be married, I'd see to it that you did not mope. But under the circumstances, you see, my dear——"

"You will have something else to do. I quite understand."

"And you must come and stay with me after I am married. You really must."

"It is very kind of you to wish me to come. But there is the prayer-bell," cried Junia, rising. "You must go, and I must go too. I was called away to speak to Mrs Percy Smith before I sat down to my breakfast at the north lodge. Good-bye."

"At the north lodge! Why, it is more than a quarter of a mile off. And you have come all that way before breakfast! Oh, my dear Junia, what a shame!" said Miss Graham, in tones of the deepest commiseration.

"Don't pity me," said Junia; "I don't mind it at all."

"Wait, Junia, I want to speak to you."

"It must be another time," cried Junia, shrinking at the thought of meeting a crowd of strangers in the long corridor through which she must pass to reach the back-stairs, and among them Mr Kinnaird perhaps.

Doors were opening on either side; but she went on swiftly, looking neither to the right nor to the left, and escaped by the back-stairs before the prayer-bell had ceased.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Between two and three in the afternoon Kinnaird was riding out alone, in a frame of mind quite sufficient—as he said to himself—to bring on an attack of gout. He had been unutterably annoyed at hearing, after breakfast, from Miss Graham — first, that Junia Berrington was Mrs Percy Smith's governess; secondly, that she was to be at the wedding and at the breakfast. "I don't see what need you have of children and governesses at the wedding," he had said. "Surely they might have been left out. And at church too!"

Conny hastened to explain. "But Junia was such an old acquaintance; though of course, if I had supposed you would object —— but you know she can't help being a governess, poor dear thing. Still, if I had had any idea you would not like it——"

"Oh, I don't care one way or another. I merely object on principle to being crowded up with children and governesses."

"I'm afraid it can't be helped now. I am so very sorry——"

"It doesn't matter. Of course if it pleases you it's all right. I tell you I don't care one way or the other," he had said. But in truth he did care about it very much indeed. He felt that he was about to be made ridiculous.

Now even a very good man cannot always bear to be made ridiculous in a good cause. Leicester Kinnaird was not one to have ever made pretensions to goodness above his neighbours. He had been quite content so far to be supposed not to be worse than his neighbours. But now, so far from being about to be ridiculous in a good cause, he felt that he was about to be ridiculous in a bad one; for he knew that, in plain words, he had jilted Junia Berrington.

Perhaps if Junia had appeared heart-broken, woe-begone, or faded, he might have felt differently. Then he might have pitied the poor little girl who was so fond of him, and would have blamed circumstances for separating her from him. Her fondness for him would have been something pleasant to think of, and it would have been pleasant too to think that even his marriage could not extinguish that fondness. But it was quite otherwise. The "poor little girl," instead of being faded and woe-begone, was blooming and beautiful; and had shown her contempt for him as plainly as looks and words could do it. That of itself had been sufficiently galling; but it had been "Pelion on Ossa" to him when she signified that she did not even care to hear what he had to say in self-defence. What a ridiculous personage should he be in her sight on the wedding-day! And that it should be Conny Graham that had brought this about! Kinnaird ground his teeth as he thought of her. He could never remember having been made, or having made himself ridiculous in his whole life; and to be made an object of ridicule in the eyes of a poor little governess on his wedding-day of all days, and by the act of the bride herself, was a prospect too unpleasing to be met with equanimity. True, she was poor. True again, that even had he not been going to marry Miss Graham, he would on no account have married her. Long ago he had decided that such a thing as marriage with her was impossible; and he had taken great credit to himself for his wisdom in banishing all thought of her from his mind, and in making an offer of marriage to Constantia Graham. It is true that he had kept Constantia waiting a long time while he was making his mind up; but then, as he said to himself, Junia Berrington's face was not a face to forget in a hurry. And poor Conny had waited so patiently, and had been so absurdly happy when the fatal words were spoken at last which bound them together! In spite of his annoyance, Kinnaird could not but see that there was something pathetic in her position,—she so "awfully" fond of him, and he not caring—really—a rap for her; and now that other girl starting up, like a nun in the churchyard scene in *Robert le Diable!* Poor Conny!

But how lovely that other girl had looked in her plain white dress, and the natural flowers in her hair! What exquisite taste there was in the midst of all that severe simplicity! The more Kinnaird thought of her the more dissatisfied he felt with himself, and with Conny, and with creation generally. He was dissatisfied with Junia too, because of her beauty, and the sharp contrast she afforded to poor Conny Graham. "She is nothing but a pauper," said Kinnaird to himself; "and paupers have no business to look so beautiful." He had at that moment in his pocket a note which Miss Graham had begged him to carry to Junia, and which he had taken charge of without the slightest intention of delivering. He should simply drop it, and tell her that he had lost it, and there would be an end of the matter.

It was late in the afternoon when he got back to Nunehead. He had intended returning by the way he came, but he took a wrong path, and was close to the north lodge before he knew again where he was. Junia was alone in the little lodge garden. The children were gone up to the house, and she had been told she would not be wanted in the drawing-room that evening. She was pleased to be alone for a little while—pleased to think that, when the day after to-morrow should have come and gone, she would never more have to dread the proximity of a certain person.

"I suppose everybody has to put up with disagreeable things some time or other," she said to herself; "but nothing half so disagreeable will ever happen to me as this wedding and breakfast, that's very certain. Well, it can't be helped. What shall I think of it a hundred years hence, I wonder? Shall I think what a fool I was to care even as much as I do care? How different things will look then, if we do know or remember! great things will be small, and perhaps small things will be great. Now I'll be philosophical the day after to-morrow—I vow I will." She said this half aloud, and sat upright as she said it, by way of bracing herself up for the inevitable wedding and breakfast, when it would not matter what she wore, as she had been told, "so long as it was not black."

"It is quite true; it doesn't really matter," she said; yet on that point she felt unable to be as philosophical as she wished.

Just then the lodge gate clicked, and Kinnaird, having thrown his horse's reins over the garden rail, appeared before her. Junia was sitting under a walnut-tree, and he had to cross a little grass-plot before he came within speaking distance, so that she had a moment in which to collect her faculties and conceal her surprise at his appearance there. He, the thorough man of the world, was really the more disturbed of the two.

He had not intended doing this. Had he known who was sitting under the tree there, he would have sought another entrance to Nunehead than that of the north lodge. But there she was, actually within speaking distance; and he felt himself no more able to help speaking to her than he had been able to help speaking the night before, when she stood before him in the greenhouse. He had no very well defined idea what he should say, except that, her contempt being disagreeable to him, he would try to change it to sympathy. If he could but succeed in changing her from a contemptuous to a sympathetic bystander on the wedding-day, it would be worth a quarter of an hour's talk. In that case, he might consider himself rather lucky in having lost his way. He looked well at her face as he was crossing the grass-plot. "Too cold and proud to last," he thought, in his self-confidence. "Good-evening, Miss Berrington," he said, as he stood before her.

"Good-evening," said Junia, scarcely looking at him.

This, he felt, was not promising. "I came to say good-bye," he said, with a sigh,—"and to shake hands—if you will allow me."

"I have no objection," she said, taking the hand he held out to her. After such a handshake as she gave, any but a very brave man would have gone away at once. And Leicester Kinnaird was brave now, not with a constitutional bravery—of that he had none,—but with the bravery that is born of fear—the fear of being thought ridiculous.

So Kinnaird stayed and braved it. Her whole attitude was one of such persistent coldness, that he more than ever felt it due to himself not to leave her till he had succeeded in altering her mood towards him. It seemed to him that he had never met with girl or woman so hard to manage before. That there was a key to this enigma he did not doubt. How to find it was the rub.

He stood still and looked at her—so long, that at last Junia felt herself obliged to look up at him.

Then he said, "So I hear you are coming to see me turned off? Kind of you—very. Won't you wish me joy?"

"I believe I have wished you joy already; but I will do so again if you like," said Junia, with that extremely civil tone which implies displeasure. What business had he with her now ? she thought. His proper place was by Miss Graham's side. She could not understand what he meant by alluding in this way to his approaching marriage. Junia's nature was one which revolts at the idea of making fun of sacred things. Kisses, and love, and marriage were all sacred things in her estimation—things not to be lightly given, or taken, or made the subject of foolish jesting. There was no fun, to her mind, in a man talking of his wedding as if he were going to be hanged!

Kinnaird saw that he must abandon his tone of *persiflage* if he wished to make an impression on her. He remembered having heard her spoken of, long before he had thought it worth his while to be interested in her, as a girl who was always "so dreadfully in earnest." So he said, with a sudden gravity which was not without effect, "I feel like a man going about with a halter round his neck. It is not a pleasant feeling, I can assure you."

This was so different a way of putting it, that Junia did not know what to reply. She did not choose to tell him that he could take the halter off as easily as he had put it on; and that was the only thing which it occurred to her to say. So she was silent.

He said again, "Yes, a man with a halter round his neck."

"A halter of your own weaving, I think," said Junia.

"I don't know that. On the contrary, I believe that, if ever a man was the victim of circumstances, I am that man."

Junia smiled coldly. "I have heard of women being the victims of circumstances, and very likely they may be. As for men—as they usually make the circumstances for themselves, I do not see that their case calls for much pity."

"So you don't believe in a man being the victim of circumstances?"

"Not unless he chooses. He may be a willing victim, perhaps."

"You are very one-sided, Miss Berrington."

"It may be so; but it really does not signify," she said, and moved as though she would have risen.

He stopped her with a gesture. "It does signify. It signifies everything to me," he said.

"I do not see how it can, Mr Kinnaird."

"You must see, only you will not. You are like all women; you care nothing for justice."

"That is not true," Junia exclaimed, roused at last. Who was this man that he should dare put her on her defence, and take upon him the tone of an injured man? "It is not true," she said; and her eyes brightened and her cheeks flushed as she spoke. "I do not know about other women, but I know about myself; and I know that I do care for justice, more than for anything else in the world."

"More than for love?" he asked.

"Yes! yes indeed! A thousand times more!" cried Junia.

Again he was silent for a moment. Then he said, "May I sit down?" and took her consent for granted. But Junia could not have refused. There are certain courtesies which have to be maintained in civilised life, even among deadly enemies. But Junia's mind was full of the thought that this man, who had seated himself by her thus, ought rightly to be by Miss Graham's side. "If Miss Graham only knew," she said to herself, "how miserable would she be!" She felt angry with Leicester Kinnaird; more angry now, for the sake of the devoted, deluded Conny, than she had been for her own.

It might be mere propinquity; it might be the force of old association; but Kinnaird had no sooner sat down, than he felt a change, in himself, as well as in his position. He could no longer look down upon Junia, metaphorically or otherwise. Junia was no longer a pauper to him, but a beautiful woman. It was not in Kinnaird to be seated by a beautiful woman and not make love to her; and here the old habit asserted itself, with a *modicum* of genuine feeling behind the old habit, which pushed him on further and faster than he intended. He had, at the outset, only desired to turn Junia's contempt into sympathy. But now, sitting close by her, he felt that he wanted more than mere sympathy. He was truly an ill-used man, he said to himself, and deserving of a little love rather than this hostility. And he had found her so lovable, once; so tender, once the strange fit of girlish antipathy overcome! And after all, how much more attractive had she been then, than she could have been had her behaviour been like that of a ripe pear ready to drop into the first hand that touched it? As regarded himself, it was Conny Graham who had been like the ripe pear. Such was the train of thought that occupied his mind during a moment's silence. Then he said one word—"Junia."

"Not Junia, if you please, Mr Kinnaird." But as she spoke, Junia felt that her voice was not quite as steady as she could have wished.

This tone of appeal was all too strange. She knew she was right in feeling angry; but when a man takes up an appealing tone it is so very difficult to be angry.

"Why not?" he asked. "The word 'Junia' recalls to me the happiest time of my life. Yes, and the most miserable."

Junia did not answer.

"You said you were just," he continued.

"I hope I am. I wish to be."

"Then be just to me. You are silent now. I suppose you keep your justice for your favourites, not for me."

"I have no favourites," said Junia.

"Then—a truce to all this fencing! Junia, did you love me? Did I love you? Was there ever a time when we were all in all to each other? I answer for myself. You were all in all to me. You were dearer to me than any other woman had ever been. But you never really loved me. You were but a girl then, so why should I blame you? Why should I ever have flattered myself that you loved me?"

"I did love you, and you know I did," said Junia. Then suddenly recollecting herself, "But that is all over; and it is just as well."

"All over," he rejoined; "a lesson learnt and forgotten. You have got beyond it; the worse for me, who have not."

"It was a lesson you taught me," said Junia, rising. She felt her lips quivering and her voice becoming unsteady, and was determined to hide all such signs of emotion from him. "Good-bye," she said, and would have passed. But he held her hand. "It shall not be good-bye, Junia."

"It must; indeed it must. Let me go, please."

"One moment! Junia, we cannot part so —you and I——"

"Mr Kinnaird, I tell you plainly that you are, to me, just Miss Graham's husband, and nothing more; so good-bye."

Just Miss Graham's husband! Kinnaird winced as she spoke the words. He, just Miss Graham's husband, and nothing more! She had turned from him as she spoke. He went after her, and stood in her path.

"Junia, wait. It rests with you whether I am to be her husband—or yours."

Junia looked at him in pure surprise. "What!" she said, after one instant's pause, "would you be treacherous to her too? Let me pass!"

She went in and shut the door, leaving him standing—utterly discomfited—on the grass. "Miss Graham's husband, and nothing more!" he muttered to himself, as he mounted his horse and rode off. But it was not in him to be discomfited for very long. "I do believe she is fond of me for all that," he thought, on reviewing his interview with her as a whole. "Yes, she is angry, no doubt. Thinks herself badly used, poor little thing. But she is fond of me for all that." And for the first time that day he began to feel something approaching equanimity.

Kinnaird had been studying women — including girls—more or less, all his life. He believed that he had studied them very deeply. But he did not know that when a girl like Junia said, "I did love you," the love she spoke of was quite dead.

CHAPTER XXIV.

It was the sixteenth of March one thousand eight hundred and sixty. Red, white, and green streaked the slopes of the Boboli Gardens; red, white, and green decked the heads of the children at play by the fountains. The sentinels marched up and down in the shade, and let the bearers of the emblem of liberty pass by. No more yellow and black stripes, no more cross-keys, no grand-ducal quarterings were to be seen anywhere; but instead, the beloved tricolour and the white cross of Savoy on its blood-red ground. Florence, all glorious within, stood crowned with flowers — a bride adorned awaiting her bridegroom. Her streets resounded with music and singing; the air was rent with *vivas.* It was as though sadness, and crying, and oppression had fled for evermore, so full was the city of light, and life, and song. Yet still Codini sulked in corners, vowing under their breath vows never to enter Pitti Palace gates till their Grand Duke was back again. Still Romagna and Venetia raised their fettered hands to heaven, crying, "Lord, how long?"

Late in the afternoon of this day, the Marchese woke from a prolonged siesta in his arm-chair. He sat by a window which looked into the street; a vellum-bound book lay upon the window-sill. With eyes half closed he listened to the tramp of feet on the pavement below, and the sound of many voices singing, "*All' armi!*" with *evvivas*, loud and sonorous, interspersed.

The door opened and Signor Paolo entered, graver and more careworn than in former years. Behind him came Signora Isabella, with a small nosegay in her hand, consisting of a red and a white camellia, and a sprig of myrtle-leaf.

"Do not rise, dear Signor Marchese," she said. "I have brought this to show you what they are selling in the streets. Everybody is buying them, even the Codini, who are in fear to-day of being mobbed."

The Marchese made a feeble effort to rise, but sank back again in his chair. "Excuse me, signora," he said, in a weak quavering voice; "I think I grow more feeble every day."

"Summer is coming, *coraggio*," said Signora Isabella. "It is the trying winter which has taken away all your strength." The old man smiled, but made no reply. Signor Paolo sat down by him, cigarettes were lighted, and the two men smoked awhile in silence.

"How are things going on, Paolo *mio?*" the Marchese asked by-and-by.

"As far as I know, they are going on just as you would wish." Paolo's tone was moody and despondent; for things had taken an unlooked-for turn of late, and he—a true republican, a man who hated compromises—was feeling all the soreness of defeat. For Paolo, as became a republican, had done his best to help to send away Leopold, little thinking that he was but smoothing the path for Victor Emmanuel. He believed sincerely that at that moment Florence, in voting for a monarchy instead of a republic, had thrown away an opportunity which would perhaps never again be given to her. Ever since he had escaped from a Roman prison and had come to Florence, he had been working to give Florence such an opportunity. And this was how she had used it! This was a very bitter day for Signor Paolo. He stretched his hand towards the window-sill, and drew the open book to him and read—

"When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint within me. Behold, the voice of the cry of the daughter of my people, because of them that dwell in a far country. . . . Why have they provoked me to anger with their graven images and with strange vanities? . . . The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

"We are not saved," he repeated. "The innocent blood still cries from the stones of Perugia; the groans of the prisoners still go up from the dungeons of Rome and Naples. We are not saved!"

The words sounded like a cry of pain. Tears came into Signora Isabella's eyes as she heard them: tears of sympathy for the prisoners and the oppressed; tears of gratitude that her Paolo was no longer a prisoner—only an exile! She took up the emblematic bouquet which she had brought to show the Marchese, and stepped silently to the corner where there was a niche containing a small image: Mary stretching out her motherly arms, and bending a kind listening face from her high place in the tiny sanctuary, where a lamp had burned day and night for thirty years.

"O Madonna!" the poor signora whispered, "please tell your Son about it. Do something for those poor wretches, for pity's sake, Madonna." She laid the bouquet on the pedestal of the little lamp and returned quietly to her seat, unnoticed and unreproved by her husband. Paolo, dear good man, might lecture her; might put himself into most unphilosophical rages; but with all his cleverness and his grand talk he could never convince her that Madonna was a mere nobody up there in the celestial courts. "If I could be quite certain that it is as you say, Paolo *mio*," the signora would object, when taken to task for superstitious practices, "indeed I would do as you bid me, and never say a word to the Madonna as long as I live. But you have never been there to see, my Paolo. And until you have been there to see, how can you be certain?"

But this time Signor Paolo, leaning his head on his hand, took no heed of his wife. The Marchese saw, and smiled a lenient smile. Madonna-worship might be an old superstition, but it was one which it was as well to treat tenderly, the Marchese thought. Paolo still remained silent and dejected, thinking of the years of work which seemed now to have been wasted. The Marchese presently spoke some words of encouragement to him.

"Do not despond, my Paolo. The Lord God is King yet. How long have we Florentines waited for a day like this!"

"It is well to say 'do not despond;' it is well to say 'the Lord God is King.' I know it. Yet when I hear the cry on all sides, 'Long live free Italy!' how should I not think of Rome?"

"And Venice. True, my Paolo. Have patience yet; the end will come. How often have you said that to me when I was out of heart with the long waiting!"

"I cannot take it as quietly as you do. This—what is this but a compromise? Just hear them crying out their free Italy! The cry is a lying cry; there is no free Italy. Why are the fools down there going mad with joy, as if there were? Alas! where is the republic we dreamt of so long?"

"In Utopia," said the Marchese, quietly. "What then, my Paolo? Let us take what is given us and be thankful. The reality never quite comes up to the dream. After all, in this case, it seems to me we have got almost the thing we want, only its name is wanting. Why pout like children for the name of the thing?"

"Ah!" said the Roman, bitterly, "it is all very well to-day; but wait a little. I say put not your trust in princes."

"No," said the Marchese; "nor in any other man with a head on his shoulders."

It was getting dark. Nunziata, older and uglier than formerly, came to light the lamp and lay the supper.

"I wish Carlo would come in," said the Marchese; "he has been away nearly all day. I want him to tell me exactly how things are going on."

"When I saw him last," said Signor Paolo, "he was jabbering away to a knot of admiring *facchini* about the constitution and the duties of good citizens, and many other things which he thinks he understands."

Carlo was another of Signor Paolo's disappointments. He had tried during all these years—for Carlo had remained his pupil after all — to form him in the republican mould. And Carlo had steadily refused to be so moulded, and was showing now by his behaviour how signally it was possible for republican training to miss its aim. It made this sixteenth of March doubly distasteful to Signor Paolo, that the best-beloved and oldest of all his pupils should be using the intellect he had helped to sharpen, and the tongue he had helped to polish, for nothing better than to strengthen the hearts of the voters for the kingdom of Italy.

"It is all noise and nonsense," he said. "There is nothing in it—nothing."

The Marchese smiled and shrugged his shoulders. "Time will show," he said. "You and I have talked some nonsense in our time perhaps, Paolo."

But Signora Isabella, who had been Carlo's sworn friend ever since she nursed him through the fever, took up her favourite's defence—

"I'm sure I have heard you both say Carlo showed signs of talent. You, Paolo, especially."

"I may have said so. Very likely I did."

"Well then——"

"There he is!" the Marchese and Nunziata cried together, as the "Croce di Savoia" resounded through the vaulted staircase, sung by a fresh young tenor voice.

"Bless him, how he sings!" said the old woman as she went to open the door. The Marchese's wrinkled face was full of the pride he felt in his grandson; the signora had already a welcoming smile for him. His coming seemed to send a little wave of life in advance. Signor Paolo's compressed lips and frowning brow alone showed that the sounds of exultation gave him no pleasure.

"A day will come," he cried, in a voice of warning, "when they will hate the name of Savoy as they now hate the name of Austria."

As he spoke Carlo entered, waving his hat, and crying "*Viva!* Long live our free Italy!"

Old Nunziata took up the cry in her cracked voice—"*Viva!* Eh, your lordships, if Babbo (the ex-Grand-Duke) could hear us, would he not burst with rage?"

"Now tell me everything — everything," said the Marchese.

Carlo guided the old man's steps carefully to the supper-table. "Yes," he said, "but let us eat too. Grandfather, I have been making a speech, and you have no idea how hungry a fellow gets after making speeches. But it is pleasant too. I think I could make speeches all day if people would listen." Then clearing his throat, he added, "I have made up my mind to enter parliament."

"As soon as there is a parliament, I suppose," said Signor Paolo.

"Of course."

"And—if you can get elected, I suppose," said Signor Paolo again.

"Of course," said Carlo, laughing and reddening. "Consequently I practise beforehand to the crowd at street-corners and elsewhere, when I have a chance."

"Quite right, quite right, Carlo," said the Marchese.

"I am happy to tell you," said Carlo, when his hunger was somewhat appeased, "that there does not appear to be a doubt of the result of the voting. That was the latest news when I quitted the Palazza Vecchio;

but the number of votes cannot be known yet."

"I must be there," said the Marchese. "I cannot possibly wait here quietly till you come back, Carlo. You must manage somehow."

"To be sure," said Carlo.

The old man had not been out of his house during the winter, and Signora Isabella suggested caution, and bid him beware of night air—it was but March yet. But Carlo was bent on giving his grandfather pleasure, and would not listen to her. "Nothing could be easier," he said, "than for them to drive to the outskirts of the crowd, and then the Marchese could walk across the Piazza between him and Signor Paolo, and stand where he could hear everything and see the illuminations of the loggia." Just then Nunziata came in to say that "the tricoloured transparencies were brought for the evening illumination."

"Suppose," said Signor Paolo, "that the result of the voting should show a preponderance of votes for the republic instead of the monarchy, would the transparencies serve as well ?"

Carlo laughed. "Ah, Signor Paolo, you must have your joke. Yes, they would answer equally well. But I do not think they will be wanted for that. We are not worthy of a republic yet; we have not got over the old-fashioned liking for a visible head with a visible crown on it."

"Paolo's soul will never cease hankering after his republic," said the Marchese.

"*Padronissimo !*" (he is the master). "His soul may hanker after what it will. This is a land of liberty now," said Carlo, with a look at his old tutor, in which fun and affection were mingled. "Signor Paolo, I fill your glass with Montepulciano. Let us drink to Rome, the capital of the Italy of the future!"

The toast was drunk in silence. Signor Paolo groaned and shook his head. Compromises, half measures, were the order of the day. What hope could a Roman have for Rome? Signora Isabella covered her face with her hands. "Rome! Rome! shall we ever see thee again?" she murmured. "Could we but see Rome and die!"

"Nay," said Carlo, taking her hand; "see Rome and live! Dear friend, do not be cast down."

Old Nunziata came behind the signora's chair and patted her on the shoulder. "*Che!* keep up your spirits, lady dear. They say it is certain the king will go to Rome after he has been here. He and Gallibardi (Garibaldi) will go together and make the Holy Father behave himself. A national guard told me so."

"Meanwhile," said Signor Paolo, who had smiled contemptuously at the old woman's speech, as at an old wives' fable—"meanwhile the Papacy remains, a gangrene at the heart of Italy. Let us drink to the downfall of the Papacy."

This toast, like the former one, was drunk in solemn silence. Nunziata looked askance at Signor Paolo and crossed herself. The Holy Father being made to behave himself was one thing, and the downfall of the Papacy was another. Carlo barely touched the wine with his lips. In his heart he drank, not to the downfall of the Papacy, but to the downfall of the abuses of the Papacy. Signor Paolo had hitherto failed in all his endeavours to prove to Carlo that the Papacy itself was an abuse. The young man's eyes had flashed for an instant when Signor Paolo gave his toast; for any remark of his concerning the Papacy was as the throwing down of a gauntlet. For once Carlo forbore to pick it up.

The music of the Garibaldian Hymn from a self-constituted band and choir of street boys passing by turned the conversation into a safer channel. "Be Italy free, from the Alps to the sea!" Carlo cried, in the words of the song. "Fill your glasses, friends. I give this toast standing—'Long live our free Italy!'"

The clear young voice sounding through the open window brought an answering "*Viva*" from the passers-by in the street below. Carlo continued—"Long live Signor Paolo, who taught me to call myself Italian!"

"*Viva! viva!*" cried the Marchese.

The people in the street echoed "*Viva!*" *Viva* Ricasoli! Cavour! Gallibardi! anybody and everybody!—Babbo Leopold excepted.

Signora Isabella put out her hand: "Thanks, thanks, my Carlo," she said, with the ready tears in her eyes. She would have liked to embrace the boy—"her boy" as she still called him—for this unexpected tribute to her never-to-be-sufficiently-appreciated husband. Signor Paolo, surprised, and more pleasantly affected than he chose to appear, veiled his emotion under the query, "May a man drink long life to himself, or is such an act of evil augury?"

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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